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**The “Regional” in Polish Literary Studies before 1939.  
From Romantic Local Colour to Interwar Literary  
Regionalism\***

I

One of the current recurring themes and terms of literary studies is the “regional”. It indicates a whole discursive field combining not only such topics as centre and periphery or locality and globality (as well as glocality as a new concept undermining and trans-forming old dualistic oppositions), but somehow encompassing also phenomenological and poststructuralist studies of space as a dimension of personal and cultural imagination and memory, as well as outcomes of spatial analyses of cultural semiotics.

Focusing on individual or collective experience embedded in particular places draws attention to their specificities and therefore sheds some light on regions as accurately scaled entities – or better – communities. This perspective changes the way of understanding cultural and biographical experience. Seen as place-less, it seemed to be the same or very similar for different people in distant places (therefore for many years we were, for example, talking about one modernism instead of many of them located in different places etc.). Experience, which has been seen as the same one shared by many, now multiples, being examined as rooted in specific geographical areas. Each of its local variations turns out to be unique and exceeding a simplistic universal vision derived from the meaning coined in the influential cultural centre. It changes the ways of understanding representations of experience. And that is the reason why contemporary

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literary studies are prone to formulate questions on geographical space and its role in the production, circulation, and reception of literature.

One could see this as a brand new approach, completely different from the traditional way of investigating literary life, yet from a historical perspective, the so-called “spatial turn” happens to present questions that mimic old ones. What at first glance may seem to be driven by the core of the poststructuralist paradigm is in fact much older. What is more, it cannot be claimed that these questions are just reappearing. There was no gap. We may say – using the terms of contemporary spatial discourse – that these issues and themes have been changing places in the field, at one time being on its peripheries, then staying in the very centre, next being pushed aside and once again existing outside the mainstream of literary studies. And finally – not long after returning in the last decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century – taking the quite new shape of the so-called “spatial turn” and once again becoming one of the core problems within the discipline. At least that was the case with Polish literary studies.

Studying these shifts (or travels – since we are still in the field of space and mobility) should not be confined only to pointing them out. Their real meaning can be explained only when they are examined in the broader context, when we try to pose a question as to what were the cultural and methodological causes of these position changes – when, and why the spatial, in this case especially “regional”, subjects of literary studies shifted, as well as where this shift occurred.

## II

The first thing that for some might be surprising is the point in time when reflexion on Polish literature was first consciously connected with the local spatial issues. It should be dated to the first half of the nineteenth century and has a strong background in the philosophy and practices of the art and research of the first decades of the nineteenth century. We should take into account the origins of ethnography as a discipline which dates back to the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and on the whole are rooted in the Enlightenment’s interests in collecting and cataloguing not only ancient Greek and Roman artefacts, but also local mementos and items seen as national treasures – as in Izabela Czartoryska’s Puławy.<sup>1</sup> The first calls to collect folk creations arose at the beginning

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<sup>1</sup> Hanna Jurkowska, *Pamięć sentymentalna* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2014), 288–365. See also: Andrzej Woźniak, “Źródła zainteresowań ludoznawczych w ideologii polskiego Oświecenia,” *Etnografia Polska* 15(2) (1971).

of the nineteenth century and were connected with more general thoughts on preserving national history. The earliest was Hugo Kołłątaj’s statement from 1802.<sup>2</sup> And most appeals like these were immersed in the great interest in Slavic culture – like Zorian Dołęga Chodakowski’s (Adam Czarnocki) résumé and manifesto *O Sławiańszczyźnie przed chrześcijaństwem* [On Slavonia Before Christianity] from 1818<sup>3</sup> and his later enormous work on collecting the residues of old Slavic culture still present in folklore. It was seen as offering a chance to renovate national literature by going back to its regional origins rooted in folk songs and legends instead of using universal classical themes and genres or imported ones – at least that was the stance of Kazimierz Brodziński (1818).<sup>4</sup>

In Romanticism therefore the historical view of a native people and its culture as reflecting the ancient beginnings of the nation was also a vital source of literary inspirations. Folklore firstly seen as something well known, part of the experience of the motherland, but at the same time exotic (without any doubt it was still the culture of peasants and servants seen from the patronising perspective of the aristocracy and transformed by new imaginary elements combining among others elements of a mythical past and of witchcraft), but soon treated as the residuum of a real national spirit. What is more, although this kind of elements came from the cultures of different ethnic groups (Ukrainian, Belorussian, Lithuanian) they were established as characteristic of the Polish nation by the most important literary works of Polish Romanticism. In their later reception they were somehow unified under one national label while each of them was in fact strongly rooted in its author’s region of origin and its folklore. And their commentators of that time – unlike later canonisers – clearly saw that new tendency and quite often even criticised it.

Another important issue at the beginning of the nineteenth century was a new way of seeing land, which became not only an area of geological and geographical in-the-field exploration, but at the same time

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<sup>2</sup> Hugo Kołłątaj, “List Hugona Kołłątaja Do Jana Maja księgarza w Krakowie, pisany w Ołomuńcu z więzienia 15 Lipca 1802,” in *X. Hugona Kołłątaja korespondencja listowna z Tadeuszem Czackim*, (Kraków: Drukarnia Uniwersytecka, 1844), vol. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Zorian Dołęga Chodakowski (Adam Czarnocki), “O Sławiańszczyźnie przed chrześcijaństwem,” [1818], in *Z. D. Chodakowskiego O Sławiańszczyźnie przed chrześcijaństwem i W. Surowieckiego Zdanie o piśmie témże z dodaniem krótkiej wiadomości o Chodakowskim i korespondencji*, ed. Antoni Z. Helcel (Kraków: Drukarnia Kwartalnika, 1835).

<sup>4</sup> Kazimierz Brodziński, “O klasycyzności i romantyczności, tudzież o duchu poezji polskiej,” *Pamiętnik Warszawski* 10–11 (1818).

a source of imagery shaping ideas of particular landscapes<sup>5</sup> (which is also a process having its beginning in sentimental paradigm<sup>6</sup> – for example the Carpathian Mountains landscape described by Stanisław Staszic<sup>7</sup>) and the human-nature mystic bond which were now understood not only in general or universal terms (the mountain, the sea, the lake etc.) but also in the context of locality.

This focusing on the land together with the folklore inspirations present in Romantic literature was, however slowly, laying the foundations of an interest in the “regional” as such among literary scholars. Beside a few manifestos from the beginning of the century propounding the need for examining folklore there was no professional research conducted on it. However there were forerunners worth mentioning within literary studies. Adam Mickiewicz in his famous lectures given at the Collège de France (1840–44) put his emphasis on local colour in Slavic literary works. “Local colour” is a set of distinctive features characteristic of a particular milieu or region being reflected in literature. Using this term Mickiewicz intended not only to draw attention to the character of a certain place and its atmosphere which were present in a particular literary work, but intended also to explain the unique bond between people and land, i.e. culture and nature. Similar beliefs were expressed by Wincenty Pol in his unpublished treatise probably from 1829 titled *O źródłach narodowej poezji polskiej* [On the Sources of National Polish Poetry]. He had a vision of a human being tightly bonded with his motherland and its landscape which Pol saw as a source of national Polish poetry. He also used it as inspiration in his own poems which was deeply rooted in Polish folk songs. Pol is well known as a poet, but it is worth mentioning that he was also a great geographer and the first Polish professor of this discipline (he held a chair at the Jagiellonian University in Cracow, 1850–1853).

The first decades of the nineteenth century were a period of a great fascination with folklore as well as a time of many amateur endeavours aimed at collecting folk songs and legends (*ludoznawstwo*), but only the second half of the century was to be the time of systematised scientific research into this kind of materials (folkloristic, ethnography, and anthropology). The same was within reflection on literature. It saw folklore as source of literary themes and inspiration or even something more (the core of a national poetry?), but did not conduct any further

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<sup>5</sup> On the crucial meaning of landscape in Romanticism see: A. Kowalczykowa, *Pejzaż romantyczny* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1982).

<sup>6</sup> Jurkowska, *Pamięć*, 108–157.

<sup>7</sup> Stanisław Staszic, *O ziemiorództwie Karpatów i innych gór* (Warszawa: Drukarnia Jego Ces. król. Mości Rządowa, 1816).

research into it. Still – and it was a notion of great importance – there were some voices among Polish men of letters (mostly writers – like Mickiewicz or Pol) raising the Goethe question on the bond between the poet and his/her land. That was a question on the place of origin, its people, its landscapes seen as determining not only the artist’s life story, but also his or her works.

### III

In the first decades of the 19th century, interest in folklore was the domain of writers and literary circles, but the second half of the century was the time of institutionalising folklore research. This process resulted in the creation of the Anthropological Committee of the Academy of Learning in Cracow (1874) and the foundation of journals such as “Zbiór Wiadomości do Antropologii Krajowej” [Collection of Information for National Anthropology] (1873–94), “Wisła” [Vistula] (1887–1916) and “Lud” [Folk] (since 1895). The term “folklore” used by William Thoms was introduced in 1888 by the Polish linguist and ethnographer – Jan Karłowicz.<sup>8</sup> The shaping of the new disciplines such as ethnography, geography, and anthropology together with the sentimental and romantic fundaments of discourse on land, nation, and folk provided a frame of thinking about literature in terms of its local context in the nineteenth century. It was also a development of these disciplines which was shaping the further course of the “regional” in literary studies.

The first real scientific proposal for describing literature from the regional point of view was to emerge in the Polish humanities in the middle of the nineteenth century. In 1852, a decade before Hyppolyte Taine’s famous preface to the *History of English Literature* (but it is hard to believe that it was within noance acquaint with the philosopher’s earlier publications), Stanisław Pilat proposed a model of the literary historical process based on the author’s environment. In his treatise titled *Wycieczka w dziedzinę historii literatury* [Excursus in the Field of History of Literature] Pilat listed three kinds of influence: telluric, tribal (meaning “ethnic”), and historic.<sup>9</sup> He proposed to examine the environmental context of the development of all kinds of civilisational outcome – such as, for example, science, but stressed that in the case of literature it is easier to investigate external factors. In Pilat’s way of thinking there was no

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<sup>8</sup> Jan Karłowicz, “Folklore,” *Wisła* 2 (1888).

<sup>9</sup> Stanisław Pilat, “Wycieczka w dziedzinę historii literatury,” *Dziennik Literacki* 33–34 (1852).

reference to folklore as such, although the main inspiration was a holistic description of tribal cultures proposed by the new anthropology which determined the direction of changes in the field of Polish folklore research and finally led to the forming of a discipline (disciplines) known under a few names, each of which is connected with slightly different meanings – *ludoznawstwo*, *etnografia* (“ethnography”), *antropologia* (“anthropology”), but still all of them are dissimilar to the old ways of treating folk culture.

As has already been said, the end of Romanticism turned out to be also the end of the idealised vision of folk life and culture. The fascination and admiration was superseded by a more realistic (but still patronising) view on rural reality and a positivistic programme of helping and educating the poor. And instead of the amateur collecting of folkloric creations, the systematic data gathering and professional indexing together with scientific description and analyses began. Folklore research was then maybe not so popular as earlier, but despite this, it was much more fruitful. The most important work on taking records was done by Oskar Kolberg who, with the help of his associates and volunteer contributors, collected and edited an enormous body of folklore songs, legends, proverbs etc. He was also documenting dialects, beliefs, rituals, and customs, since gradually they also were starting to be treated as equally important material for examining folk culture.<sup>10</sup> The first volume titled *Pieśni ludu polskiego* [Polish Folk Songs] (this one had a general character) was published in 1857. There were also more and more theoretical studies on the way folklore research should be organised and conducted, and folklore began to be seen in a historical perspective – as a subject of influences and changes (in 1854 Ryszard Berwiński published *Studia o literaturze ludowej ze stanowiska historycznej i naukowej krytyki* [Studies on Folk Literature from the Point of View of Historical and Scientific Critique]<sup>11</sup>).

The important thing was that Kolberg’s *opus magnum* was one work divided by regions (each volume presents a different region).<sup>12</sup> However,

<sup>10</sup> Oskar Kolberg, *Lud. Jego zwyczaj, sposób życia, mowa, podania, przysłowia, obrzędy, gusta, zabawy, pieśni, muzyka i tańce*. Kolberg himself published 33 volumes, 3 more were issued posthumously and the final edition of all materials exceeds 80 volumes. Other holistic analyses of the folk culture of a particular region: Kornel Kozłowski, *Lud. Pieśni, podania, baśnie, zwyczaj i przesady z Mazowsza Czerskiego* (Warszawa: [s.n.], 1867–73); Władysław Siarkowski, *Materiały do etnografii ludu polskiego z okolic Kielc* (Kraków: AU, 1878–80); Michał Federowski, *Lud białoruski na Rusi Litewskiej* (Kraków: AU, 1891–1903), vol. 1–3 [the other three volumes were published posthumously].

<sup>11</sup> Ryszard W. Berwiński, *Studia o literaturze ludowej ze stanowiska historycznej i naukowej krytyki* (Poznań: published at the author’s expense, 1854), vol. 1–2.

<sup>12</sup> See also: Oskar Kolberg, *Pokucie: obraz etnograficzny* (Kraków: AU, 1882–89), vol. 1–4; Oskar Kolberg, *Mazowsze: obraz etnograficzny* (Kraków: Zapomoga Kasy im. J. Mianowskiego, 1885–90), vol. 1–5.; Oskar Kolberg, *Chelmskie: obraz etnograficzny* (Kraków: AU, 1890–91), vol. 1–2.

single region collections were compiled well before (and often as dictated by their creators' place of origin). That was the *modus operandi* for the most of early collectors – they investigated folk culture in Galicia (Wacław Zalewski, Żegota Pauli, Józef Konopka),<sup>13</sup> Podhale (Ludwik Zejszner),<sup>14</sup> Masovia,<sup>15</sup> Kashubia (Florian Ceynowa),<sup>16</sup> Masuria (Gustaw Gizewiusz),<sup>17</sup> Silesia (Józef Lompa, Andrzej Cinciała, Juliusz Roger),<sup>18</sup> Great Poland (Jan Józef Lipiński)<sup>19</sup> and West Prussia (Ignacy Łykowski)<sup>20</sup> as well as Ruthenian (Aleksander Rypiński, Jan Czczott)<sup>21</sup> and Ukrainian (Antoni Marcinkowski)<sup>22</sup> folklore.

For ethnographers it seems to be natural to think about folklore in the frame of regional differences. For literary studies it was not so obvious. The first attempts to describe Polish literature in terms of regional differentiation were made in the 1880s. In 1884 during the Jan Kochanowski conference of literary historians in Cracow Bronisław Chlebowski presented a paper titled *Znaczenie różnic terytorialnych, etnograficznych i związanej z nimi odrębności ekonomiczno-społecznych, politycznych i umysłowych stosunków dla naukowego badania dziejów literatury polskiej* [The Importance of Territorial, Ethnographic

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<sup>13</sup> Wacław z Oleska (Wacław Zalewski), *Pieśni polskie i ruskie ludu galicyjskiego z muzyką instrumentowaną przez Karola Lipińskiego* (Lwów: Franciszek Piller, 1833); Żegota Pauli, *Pieśni ludu polskiego w Galicji* (Lwów: Kajetan Jabłoński, 1838), *Pieśni ludu ruskiego w Galicji* (Lwów: Kajetan Jabłoński, 1839–1840); Józef Konopka, *Pieśni ludu krakowskiego* (Kraków: Józef Czech, 1840).

<sup>14</sup> Ludwik Zejszner, *Pieśni ludu Podhalan czyli Górali tatrowych polskich* (Warszawa: Redakcja Biblioteki Warszawskiej, 1845).

<sup>15</sup> Roman Zamarski (Zmorski), *Podania i baśnie ludu w Mazowszu* (Wrocław: Zygmunt Schletter, 1852).

<sup>16</sup> Florian Ceynowa, *Sto frantovek z południowej części Pomorza Kaszubskiego, osobliwie z zjemj Svejckiej, Krajni, Koczevja i Borów z dodatkiem trzech prosb na vesele* (Svjecje nad Vjsłą: I. Hauffe, 1866).

<sup>17</sup> Gustaw Gizewiusz, "Pieśni ludu znad górnej Drwęcy," *Przyjaciel Ludu* 5–7 (1839) [fragments].

<sup>18</sup> Józef Lompa, *Klechdy ludu polskiego w Szląsku* [Legends of Polish Folk from Silesia] (Bochnia: Wawrzyniec Pisz, 1858); Józef Lompa, *Przysłowia i mowy potoczne ludu polskiego w Szląsku* (Bochnia: Wawrzyniec Pisz, 1858); Andrzej Cinciała, *Pieśni ludu szląskiego z okolic Cieszyna* (Kraków: [s.n.], 1885); Juliusz Roger, *Pieśni ludu polskiego w Górnym Szląsku* (Wrocław: A. Hepner, 1880).

<sup>19</sup> Jan Józef Lipiński, *Piosenki ludu wielkopolskiego* (Poznań: Nowa Księgarnia, 1842).

<sup>20</sup> Ignacy Łykowski, *Pieśni gminne i przysłowia ludu polskiego w Prusach Zachodnich* (Brodnica: C. A. Köhlera, 1854).

<sup>21</sup> Aleksander Rypiński, *Białorus: kilka słów o poezji prostego ludu tej naszej polskiej prowincii; o jego muzyce, śpiewie, tańcach, etc.* (Paryż: published at the author's expense, 1840); Jan Czczott, *Piosnki wieśniacze z nad Niemna i Dźwiny, niektóre przysłowia i idiotyzmy, w mowie sławiano-krewickiej, s postrzeżeniami nad nią uczynionemi* (Wilno: [s.n.], 1846).

<sup>22</sup> Antoni Marcinkowski, *Lud ukraiński: jego pieśni, bajki, podania, klechdy* (Wilno: published at the expense of Teofil Glücksberg, 1857).

Differences and Related with Them Distinctions of Socio-Economic, Political and Intellectual Relations for the Scientific Study of the History of Polish Literature<sup>23</sup>. Then one year later he published *Zadania historii literatury polskiej wobec etnograficznych, politycznych i umysłowych czynników jej dziejowego rozwoju* [The Tasks of the History of Polish Literature Towards Ethnographic, Political and Intellectual Factors of Its Historical Development].<sup>24</sup> Chlebowski proposed to replace literary history models based on periods or genres by the history of literature seen as a sequence of cultural and political changes provoked by intellectual life cycles and the transfer of ideas between regions. He was describing literary life in terms of migration, colonisation, and the moving of the centre. Such a reflexion led to examining the geographical and social specificity of particular lands. He also provided an outline of Polish literature seen from this point of view, rewriting the one national history into a set of regional histories. Nevertheless at the turn of the century Polish scholars interested in folk culture were focusing mainly on regional dialects. That was the time of such prominent Polish linguists as Lucjan Malinowski or Kazimierz Nitsch.

During the same famous conference in Cracow at which Chlebowski presented his paper on the new model of literary history, another Polish literary scholar, Piotr Chmielowski, gave a talk on the place of folk poetry in the history of national literature – *Jak należy traktować utwory poezji ludowej w historii literatury polskiej* [How to Treat Works of Folk Poetry in the History of Polish Literature].<sup>25</sup> The problem of folk culture and the history of Polish literature was becoming more and more important in the era of emerging modern national identity. It was connected with the social issue of rural people being equal members of society or – better – regional societies. The new perspective was democratising. Folk culture was now seen as equal or even superior (peasant-mania among the nobles) to the culture of other social strata. That was an important context of the forming of regional identities of a new kind.

Firstly there was a political aspect involved – it was still the time of the partitions which means there were three territorial divisions of Poland. Secondly – and this was a more important factor – in some places

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<sup>23</sup> Bronisław Chlebowski, "Znaczenie różnic terytorialnych, etnograficznych i związanej z nimi odrębności ekonomiczno-społecznych, politycznych i umysłowych stosunków dla naukowego badania dziejów literatury polskiej," in *Archiwum do dziejów literatury i oświaty w Polsce*, vol. 5 (Kraków, 1886).

<sup>24</sup> Bronisław Chlebowski, *Zadania historii literatury polskiej wobec etnograficznych, politycznych i umysłowych czynników jej dziejowego rozwoju* (Warszawa: Drukarnia K. Kowalskiego, 1885).

<sup>25</sup> Piotr Chmielowski, "Jak należy traktować utwory poezji ludowej w historii literatury polskiej," in *Archiwum do dziejów literatury i oświaty w Polsce*, vol. 5 (Kraków, 1886).



(for example in Great Poland) there was strong regional identity crossing the social divide. The important role of academic regional institutions devoted to research into local history, geography, and ethnography – for example the Ethnological Society in Lviv or the Society of the Friends of Learning in Poznań, as well as local communities of the already mentioned journals (e.g. "Wisła" in Warsaw) is not to be ignored.

For Polish scholars from the second half of the "long" nineteenth century "regional" was the key to understanding how "national" is made, what kind of parts it combines in terms of language, literary works, or generally culture, and what is the (hi)story behind it. Recording, preserving, and studying the locality of particular works, customs, or dialects made it possible to define the Polish nation as a general idea by showing its roots and the elements of which it was composed.

#### IV

In the first decades of the twentieth century there was new, and more methodical, scientifically disciplined (all the collections were well documented and edited) research on local creation. More and more often the aim was to find a general rule or pattern, differences and similarities. This often meant combining aspects of the universal (i.e. national) and the regional. There was investigation into geographical variants of the Polish language in folklore mostly,<sup>26</sup> but also of proverb variants,<sup>27</sup> legends, and versions of folklore stories<sup>28</sup> as well as the differences between the poetics of folk songs from different parts of Poland (the first person to investigate the style and versification of folk songs was Karłowicz<sup>29</sup>).

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<sup>26</sup> Kazimierz Nitsch, *Wybór polskich tekstów gwarowych* (Lwów: K. S. Jakubowski, 1929); Fryderyk Lorentz, *Teksty pomorskie czyli słowiańsko-kaszubskie* (Kraków: Akademia Umiejętności), 1913-24), vol. 1-3; Łucjan Kamieński, *Pieśni ludu pomorskiego* (Toruń-Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Instytutu Bałtyckiego, Skł. gł. Kasa im. Mianowskiego - Instytut Popierania Nauki, 1936); Władysław Skierkowski, *Puszcza kurpiowska w pieśni* (Płock : Wydawnictwo Towarzystwa Naukowego Płockiego, 1928-34), vol. 1-4; Augustyn Steffen *Opowiadania komiczne i podania z Warmii* (Kraków: Towarzystwo Pomocy Dzieciom i Młodzieży Polskiej w Niemczech, 1937); Augustyn Steffen, *Zbiór polskich pieśni ludowych z Warmii* (Poznań-Leszno: Towarzystwo Pomocy Dzieciom i Młodzieży Polskiej w Niemczech, Marcin Fiutak, 1931-37), vol. 1-3; *Pieśni ludowe z polskiego Śląska*, ed. by Emil Szramek (Kraków: Polska Akademia Umiejętności, Wydawnictwa Śląskie, 1927-39, vol. 1-3).

<sup>27</sup> Kazimierz Bystroń, *Przysłowia polskie*, (Kraków: Polska Akademia Umiejętności, 1933). Two earlier important treatises on this topic: Aleksander Brückner, "Przysłowia," *Ateneum* 3, 1895; Samuel Adalberg, *Księga przysłów, przypowieści i wyrażeń przysłowiowych polskich* (Warszawa: Emil Skiński, 1889).

<sup>28</sup> Fex. Jan Karłowicz, "Podanie o Madeju," *Wisła* 2-3, 1888-89.

<sup>29</sup> Jan Karłowicz, „Studia nad treścią i formą pieśni ludowych polskich,” *Prawda* 30-31, 1882.

Folk songs, poems etc. started to be seen as literary works in themselves (*literatura ludowa*) and in consequence the same research tools started to be used in this area.<sup>30</sup> And another important shift in the first decade of the 20th century was that the regional heritage was now understood as a mixture of vernacular and literary creativity. Therefore mutual influences between folklore and learned literature soon became an important subject of literary studies.<sup>31</sup>

This kind of studies undermining the gap between social strata led (among other factors) to the new way of using the term “folklore”. It became part of the characteristics of a different group – not only peasants, but for example city inhabitants. The city as an important centre of modern political and cultural life started to be seen as a new kind of space, a new kind of region itself. Although investigating cities and their folklores was mainly the domain of sociology,<sup>32</sup> literary scholars (or those who were mixing literary studies with sociology) were also beginning to treat the city as their own subject of interest.<sup>33</sup> This tendency might be seen not only as a consequence of the development of the social sciences, but also in connection with a greater interest in popular literature (which was mainly a phenomenon of urban folklore) among literary scholars.<sup>34</sup> The inclusion of the city shaped the modern concept of literary geography.<sup>35</sup> This way a new spatial angle appeared in the thinking about locality and literature.

One should not overlook the fact that the trajectory of the “regional” in the 1920s and 1930s was partially also a result of political change. After

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<sup>30</sup> Jan St. Bystron, *Artyzm pieśni ludowej* (Poznań-Warszawa: Księgarnia św. Wojciecha, 1921); Julian Krzyżanowski, *Pieśniarz krainy kęp i wiecznej łądy. Rzecz o Władysławie Orkanie* (Zakopane: Muzeum Tatrzańskie w Zakopanem and “Związek Podhalań”, 1927); Julian Krzyżanowski, *Romans polski wieku XVI* (Lublin-Warszawa: Dom Książki Polskiej, 1934); Karol L. Koniński, *Pisarze ludowi. Wybór pism i studium o literaturze ludowej* (Lwów: Spółdzielnia Wydawnicza “Wies”, 1938), vol. 1–2.

<sup>31</sup> Julian Krzyżanowski, *Paralele. Studia porównawcze z pogranicza literatury i folkloru* (Warszawa: Towarzystwo Literackie im. A. Mickiewicza and Biblioteka Polska, 1935); Witold Klinger, *Z motywów wędrownych pochodzenia klasycznego* (Poznań: Uniwersytet Poznański, 1921); Stefan Vrtel-Wierczyński, *Staropolska legenda o św. Aleksym na tle porównawczym literatur słowiańskich*, (Poznań: Poznańskie Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Nauk, 1937); Jan Janów, „Z dziejów polskiej pieśni historycznej,” *Pamiętnik Literacki* XXVI, 1929 and his other articles.

<sup>32</sup> Florian Znaniński, *Miasto w świadomości jego obywateli* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Polskiego Instytut Socjologiczny, 1931).

<sup>33</sup> Jan S. Bystron, *Publiczność literacka* (Lwów-Warszawa: Książnica Atlas, 1938).

<sup>34</sup> Julian Krzyżanowski, *Romans polski wieku XVI*, (Lublin-Warszawa: Dom Książki Polskiej, 1934).

<sup>35</sup> See for example: Kazimierz Wyka, “Próba geografii literackiej”, *Trybuna Literatów i Artystów* 1 (1938).

the collapse of the old powers, regional research sometimes was a kind of political tool or even weapon in the struggle over merging new states (like the three parts of post-partition Poland) as well as battles over disputed borders and territories. The aim was to prove the particular indigenous character of the land and its people as an attempt to legitimise the claims of a particular national state. The regaining of their independence by the Poles was the beginning of the construction of the modern nation-state, which necessitated a kind of unification of the institutions and societies of the three districts. This did not mean however removing or ignoring regional differences. What is more the interwar period was a time of flourishing of regional movements in Europe (somehow also agrarism). Among its most active representatives in Poland should be mentioned at least Aleksander Patkowski – a promoter and theoretician of regionalism.<sup>36</sup> The context of geographical and political regionalism as well as inspiration derived from sociology seems generally to have been more important for the “regional” in the literary studies of the first decades of the twentieth century than modern studies on folk culture conducted for example by Cezaria Baudouin de Courtenay or Stefan Czarnowski. Ethnography, ethnology, and anthropology certainly influenced literary folkloristics but this kind of research was oriented more anthropologically (meaning focused on examining the general characteristics of culture) than strictly regionally.

This regional self-awareness was gradually becoming more and more important in the cultural life of interwar Poland. The best proofs of that were not only regional, but also regionalist literary groups<sup>37</sup> and regional literature<sup>38</sup> (as well as literature about the region<sup>39</sup> – which is not the same). What is more important, the complex relationship of literature and the region finally began to be noticed by literary scholars. Kazimierz Czachowski<sup>40</sup> and Ignacy Fik<sup>41</sup> even used the term “regionalism” when

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<sup>36</sup> Aleksander Patkowski, “Idee przewodnie regionalizmu,” *Przegląd Współczesny* 30 (1924); *Ruch regionalistyczny w Europie*, ed. Aleksander Patkowski, Olaf Andersen et al. (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Sekcji Regionalistyczno-Krajoznawczej Związku Nauczycielstwa Polskiego, 1934), vol. 1–2.

<sup>37</sup> Like Żagary in Vilnius, Okolice Poetów in Ostrzeszów or Czartak promoting Beskidy. See also: Czesław Miłosz, “Sens regionalizmu,” *Pion* 2 (1932).

<sup>38</sup> For example the Silesian novels by Gustaw Morcinek or *Na wysokiej połoninie* by Stanisław Vincenz about the Hutsul culture.

<sup>39</sup> See for example Stefan Żeromski’s *Wiatr od morza* (1922), as well as his other books whose action takes place in Pomerania, Kielce and Sandomierz regions or Świętokrzyskie Mountains.

<sup>40</sup> Kazimierz Czachowski, „Ekspresjonizm i neorealizm,” in *Obraz współczesnej literatury polskiej 1884–1934*, vol. 3: (Warszawa-Lwów: Państwowego Wydawnictwo Książek Szkolnych, 1936).

<sup>41</sup> Ignacy Fik, “Linie podziału w literaturze,” *Pion* 2 (1932).

describing contemporary literature. Its regional dimension for Czachowski was something to be appreciated – for Fik something to be condemned. Yet most important was the theoretical work of Stefania Skwarczyńska.<sup>42</sup>

Before Skwarczyńska there was no theoretical study on the subject despite two important nineteenth century works (by Pilat and Chlebowski) and the quite big influence of Taine's philosophy on Polish literary studies. Skwarczyńska's *Regionalizm a główne kierunki teorii literatury* [Regionalism and the Main Trends in Theory of Literature] published in 1936 was not only a proposal for examining regional literature, but primarily for the "regional" in literature. She was against looking for any connections between literature and region other than those of a strictly literary provenance and she pointed out the urgent need for theoretical reflection on the nature of the relationship between literature and region. According to her, crucial for the "regional" is a special bond between human and land in its local specifics. It affects the personality of the creator, the creative process, the individual aesthetic experience of the reader, and the reception of a literary work among the audience as well as the form and genre of literary work. Additionally Skwarczyńska, being aware of the new sociological urban research, treated the countryside and the city as two types of the same thing, two types of spatial environment influencing human experience and output.

Skwarczyńska's proposition was holistic, and despite the fact that she advocated the need to include the external context in the study of a literary work, all of it was still in close connection with literariness itself. Nevertheless probably this concept would not have been formulated if it was not for the interwar regional movement and all the political and social discussions on the development of particular provincial regions as well as the long tradition of research on folklore creative work as seen in its local context.

### *Abstract*

The paper is an attempt to examine the background of modern regionalism in Polish literary studies. The author poses also a question on the broader cultural context of the focus on the "regional". She starts from Sentimental and Romantic interests in local spatial issues. Then she goes through various ways of collecting and examining regional folklore in the second half of the 20th and the beginning of the 19th century. And finally she

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<sup>42</sup> Stefania Skwarczyńska, "Regionalizm a główne kierunki teorii literatury," *Prace Polonistyczne* 1 (1936).

presents interwar theoretical works in which regionalism was appearing as a term and as a method, as a paradigm of a holistic approach towards literature.

*Key words:* history of Polish literary studies, ethnography, folklore, folk literature, regionalism

