

The goal of the project is the reconstruction of the semantics of the most important terms used to describe literature in Polish literary studies in the years 1795-1830. In order to point them out, reconstruct the changes they underwent and to describe their function in the system of beliefs regarding literature, the terminology used by literary scholars of the time shall be analyzed. The choice of the subject of study is based on the premise that it is in the field of terminology where a scholarly discipline's self-awareness shines through, and that it is at the linguistic level available to the researcher where the conceptual system and the period's worldview are bound to it.

Due to that the examination of literary science terminology will help answer the question raised by the project: what idea or ideas of literature can be found in the texts which are the subject of the study? What concept of literature is contained therein? What methods of study do they postulate? What goals to they set for the study of literature? The answer to these questions does not only shape literary studies as an academic discipline, but also co-creates the literary awareness of the time period. The gradually shaped knowledge, passed down by schools, academies and the press brought readers and authors together, forming (most intensely in the period discussed) both academic, as well as its homologous aesthetic and literary canon.

The history of terminology and concepts will not just allow for the better understanding of literary and scientific awareness of the period, but also help fill in our knowledge about the beginnings of literary studies as a scientific – and especially academic – discipline. It took shape in the process of translation, assimilation, creation and definition of terminology. The translation process – inherently intertwined with semantic displacement and reinterpretation – will thus be treated not as the result of outside influence or terminological borrowing, but as an element which aided the formulation of literary theory. One of the goals of this research project is widening the scope of reflection on Polish theoretical literary studies by moving the point of considered to be their beginnings to the period under discussion and by substantiating the decision to do so.

The reason for taking up the above mentioned subject could be thus defined as the need to fill out the grievous gap in the studies of the history of Polish literary studies. The chosen time period – which is in many ways transitory, groundbreaking, multilingual and composed of many voices – seems especially attractive from the perspective of modern research, as it seems to be more closely related to modern literary studies than the more stable periods that surround it: the classicism of King Stanislaw's reign and mature romanticism. Studies in historical poetics point the way towards reclaiming the humanist thought of the period which was forced to process the universal legacy of the Enlightenment and which had done so in a creative way, but which is still perceived in literary studies through the lens of the debate between the classicists and the romanticists, and judged based on the merits of the latter. To date, attempts to rehabilitate the period have been made on the grounds of the history of literature, but the point of entry to the epistemically valuable works has almost always been the character of the literary period – not the reconstruction of the foundational tenets of the period's literary scholarship. And it is the reconstruction of the tenets postulated by the time's theoreticians which will allow us to deepen the self-awareness of the academic discipline of literary studies, especially as regards its vocabulary (which is quite often still in use today), and thus legitimately broaden our thinking on the discipline outside the commonly accepted definitions, consequently allowing us to further define the character of modern practices of literary and cultural studies. Further, it is indeed the history of terminology which can give us the opportunity to support the translation of methodological concepts which took shape at the onset of modernity to later ideas, and thus reclaim an unacknowledged part of the legacy of literary studies.

In the course of the research, I will perform an analysis of source texts (including archived texts, manuscripts and text that have not been reissued since early XIX century) which would fall under a broad definition of literary studies: transcripts of academic lectures, textbooks on poetics, academic treatises published in the press and self-contained volumes. The basis of this material shall enable not just the reconstruction of the tenets common among literary scholars of the time, but also the specific beliefs of particular authors, including Leon Borowski, Kazimierz Brodziński, Alojzy Feliński, Filip Golański, Józef Korzeniowski, Józef Franciszek Królikowski, Ludwik Osiński, Stanisław Potocki, Euzebiusz Słowacki or Franciszek Wężyk.