

# POETRY AS AN ITERATURE

## The relationship between elements of poetic language and free verse

### Summary

The term used in the title may, of course, be regarded as a stylistic device which – as is often the case in the opening part of a title – is responsible for metaphorically introducing the subject matter of the discourse below. This type of formulation has a great role to play, because the reader immediately starts thinking about the image evoked, firstly – the initial impression, secondly – the meaning of such a rendition. This element is, in relation to this work, precisely the most significant: readers' reactions are to a large degree dependent on the standard of language the recipient has at his or her disposal.

In this case, there is an apparent defect, which saves the proposed formula from unavoidably embarrassing the reader. For if we were to state that poetry is literature, you would require enormous rhetorical talent when called on to explain the justification for using such a woolly figure of speech.

The defect, though, is only seeming, as it at the same time constitutes a conscious reference to the tradition of thinking about free verse considered here. This gradable absence, precisely as a variation from the norm, is a form of implication with quite a lively tradition in the history of the verse form analysed here (and so of course also – for poetic language compared with the demotic). It is thus not unusual when looking at free verse for it to be preceded by reflection on its somehow troubling rhythmic, graphic or aural regularity. An obvious element of the form lies within the reader, and the adventure with the text has almost become an entirely fresh challenge with each reading.

*Iterature* is a condensate, because – as a neologism – it has a defined semantic potential. It refers both to literature, as well as to iteration. That second reference is of more significance in this work. For iteration – as an ordered repetition – is the primary phenomenon from the perspective of the assumptions adopted here. They concern both the formal perspective, and so free verse itself, as well as the semantic-textual perspective, and so the elements of poetic language and their relations. These perspectives are isolated for the purposes of argument and serve exclusively to explore the various factors influencing the interpretation of poetic texts.

Poetry seen as an *iterature* is thus the art of interpretative repetition, because the method of constructing the interpretational design lies in the reader's repetition. The verse's spatial quality, as well as the complex relations between the individual elements, mean the interpretation of the text occurs through repeated readings – in a way – excessive. All these questions will be looked at in turn, so as to create a complex justification for the concept adopted in this work.

*Iterature* is, thus, a specific kind of literature, whose interpretation is dependent on a repetition that is twisted, anachronistic (because specially suspended in time), resulting in a peculiarly looped task, seemingly closed in on itself and with restricted freedom to move. Free verse here is understood in this manner on account of its being a given form, its inexhaustible avant-garde nature and anticipatory power as an art form. A definition of the specificity of this kind of poetry is possible based on the history of the form, but it can however – also in a certain sense iteratively – be realised through slow synchronic research. Slow, because it refers to the map of the text, to its landmarks, to the linguistic relations in an ongoing relationship to the surrounding culture, relations which discreetly orient future interpretative acts.

The book is composed of four parts. The first explores the issue of condensation, and thus the form of free verse as well as the parameters and phenomena defining its textual space. Part two introduces the category of poetic accommodation, and thereby constitutes an introduction to the particular syntactical reflection used in relation to free verse. Part three concerns phraseological reminiscence, which is a process-based understanding of the functioning of phraseological echoes as a particular category for poetry – with particular relevance for free verse. The final part – iterative attempts – contains five interpretative sketches focussing on elements of the

poetic idiolects analysed on the basis of the theoretical assumptions adopted in this monograph.

The majority of the categories discussed in this work, above all, are poetic relationality, ellipticity, tabularity\*, accommodation, phraseological reminiscence, phraseological echoes or phraseological supposition, these are original terms which are closely correlated with the concept for the description of poetry used in this monograph of free verse as an iterature.

The basic material examined is volumes of poetry by dozens of Polish authors, among which are representatives of older generations as well as poets who appeared in the twenty-first century. The temporal perspective here, though, is of a general ordering nature. In part four, there are sketches looking at poems by selected authors, as an attempt at applying the adopted method to the analysed art form.

The book constitutes the development of a concept which arose several years ago while discussing poetry with literary and linguistic researchers, and also during the unhurried reading, recitation and setting to music of poems, and of various reading experiences which remain to this day unforgettable.

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\* Tabularity in poetry refers to the functional difference of lines of poetry in the construction of the text, caused by their non-linear nature – creating the spatial effect of free verse.