

# Literary practices of everyday life

## Theory and a case study

### S u m m a r y

The book is an attempt at combining literary studies with the everyday life studies. Its main purpose is to present the concept of "literary practices of everyday life" and a case study inspired by this theory.

A substantial part of the work is devoted to theoretical analysis of the proposed research approach and to methodological considerations. What is of particular interest to the author is where his approach can be situated within the Polish tradition of literary research, especially that of the 1970s, and now in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, when we are experiencing a "cultural shift" in literary studies. Other areas of the humanities are of interest to the author are: the anthropology of literature, folklore studies, and the sociology of literature.

The thesis is mostly inspired by the philosophical and sociological issue of the relation between art and everyday life, which is crucial to the study of everyday life. Questions abound with regard to these issues: Is art autonomous, or is it inseparable from everyday life? Is everyday life creative or dull? Which practices do we consider art, and which are "mere" everyday life practices? These problems are so common in contemporary public discourse that we may even point to two specific slogans that describe contemporary relations between art and everyday life: "everything is art" and "art is dead". Researchers like Michel de Certeau, Jacques Rancière, Ben Highmore offer different insights into these matters, which are discussed in the thesis.

In literary studies these issues take the form of anxiety about the status of literature (What is literature? Is it still important for contemporary society?) What is curious is the fact that in the 1960s and 1970s this anxiety produced interesting concepts in mainstream literary studies, which broadened the scope of literary criticism. The same cannot be said of mainstream literary studies in recent years. Despite their purported focus on different literary practices and phenomena, they are still mostly concerned with the academic literary canon. This thesis tries to indicate concepts and methods that have a long tradition in Polish literary studies and that may inspire research which combines literary studies, anthropology and folklore studies.

Contrary to what might be expected, the author does not seek definitive answers to the questions of what is art (literature) and how it is different from everyday life. The concept of literary practices of everyday life suggests that we should focus our attention on situations that are, by definition, both artistic and everyday. The author would like to prove that such a construct is a natural field of research for literary studies, not only at the beginning of the 21st century, but also traditionally.

The second part of the thesis is a case study that focuses on amateur literature as a field of studies that usually dealt with the relations between art and everyday life. The key issue here is the choice of qualitative research methods. This study is an instrumental case study, and the author uses interviews to better understand the literary and social phenomena in question. The case study describes the practices of high schoolers from Konin who wrote a novel during their time at school. They used writing practices as artistic modes of expression and as relationship-building tools, which is analyzed by the author. Furthermore, the case study tries to analyze the sociological implications of conducting research on these kinds of literary practices referencing the concepts of "action research" or "cultural animation".