

Czesław Hernas

The place of research on literary folklore

Literary Studies in Poland 1, 71-85

1978

Artykuł został zdigitalizowany i opracowany do udostępnienia w internecie przez Muzeum Historii Polski w ramach prac podejmowanych na rzecz zapewnienia otwartego, powszechnego i trwałego dostępu do polskiego dorobku naukowego i kulturalnego. Artykuł jest umieszczony w kolekcji cyfrowej bazhum.muzhp.pl, gromadzącej zawartość polskich czasopism humanistycznych i społecznych.

Tekst jest udostępniony do wykorzystania w ramach dozwolonego użytku.

Czesław Hernas

The Place of Research on Literary Folklore

In order to pass through the complicated disputes on the scope of literary folklore clearly, I will try to outline here one, simple in fact, way of thinking which, as I believe, demands taking up and which will decide the place of research on literary folklore. It is worth starting with what is undisputable. Therefore the term "literary folklore" used here will be only a working expression used to isolate what the different definitions of folklore have in common, regardless of the differences, i. e. of what else researchers include, apart from the oral literature, within the range of "lore" or what they exclude from it. Oral literature, treated as a subject for research, is undoubtedly an invariant of these definitions.

For the sake of precision it is also necessary to accept as a starting point the generally understood notion of "folk" as it was established in scholarship according to the sociology of folklore in the 19th century, when the term came into existence and when in certain conditions of social changes a special interest developed for traditions opposite to the previously cultivated pattern (the oppositions of "North" and "South," simplicity and civilization). This led to the discovery of peasant culture in Europe and, in effect, a second invariant was formed which in European consciousness appeared in a characteristic and essential composition, since at the same time the primitive culture of overseas peoples was being discovered, earlier known to writers and understood as primordality and treated as *reference* for research on native primordality. It is possible to formulate the difference in looking at these two ranges in the juxtaposition: authentic primitivism as a starting point for confronting

cultures and for reflections on the nature of man, on social ties, and the authentic native simplicity as the starting point for the inward confrontation of the cultural process, although also for searching in this process for a new cultural pattern which could be taken up.

Thus "folk," understood in this way, up to now has been a primarily peasant society, although not everywhere to the same degree. The further it is geographically and in respect to civilization from the official centres of culture, the nearer it is to the intention of "folk" of the definition. Therefore town people, living in spheres of civilization, have found themselves on the disputable margins of this definition, although it should be added that in England and Germany the description of their culture was undertaken earlier.

The undisputable understanding of the term "literary folklore" thus leads to distinguishing the traditionally transmitted peasant oral literature which, as a collection of texts, differs from other literary collections.

This different nature of the function links literary folklore to the whole of "lore," to a system of folk knowledge and belief, together with their corresponding rituals, while the question of the quality of these connections leads then to the various parts of the definition and to its neighbouring scientific branches or—if one prefers—to the various inherent sections of the widely understood study of folklore, these functions being motivated by extra-linguistic reality.

Whichever way one looks at it, in order to make an analysis of a piece of folklore literature one has to take into account not only the opposition of the language of the utterance to—generally speaking—the language of literature, but also an equally important internal opposition, to the description of which leads the following question:

What is the relationship between folklore and dialect, and in what way does the language of songs, puzzles, harangues, proverbs, tales differ from applied language—from ordinary, colloquial speech?¹

It is necessary, however, to make decisions about the basic sense and the undisputable core of the term, which is representative for contemporary opinions, very carefully, in order not to stumble over the expression "folklore."

¹ J. Bartmiński, *O języku folkloru (On Folklore Language)*, Wrocław 1973, p. 9.

The term, as it is well-known, was used by William Thoms in 1846. The new-coined word was not the result of either the wider theoretical considerations of the author or the result of a defined and full systematics. This neologism separated the subject of research and included it in the current opinions on culture at that time, entangled in myth-making intuitions which were characteristic of the epoch and in the light of which folklore was rather a *contradiction* than a *part* of general culture. Perhaps it was just this theoretical indefiniteness that was the value of the neologism and helped it towards its international career.

Later however, together with the progress of theoretical and especially of field work, a picture of folklore, different from that of the model established on Romantic dichotomies, started to emerge. The source of interference in the accepted picture were the most simple documental questions, different necessities from the range of identifications which were being made, and factography which in the second half of the 19th century grew to hold a much higher position in scholarship.

The quickly enriched documentation, the definite metrical agreements, or the more frequent uncertain agreements undermined distinguishing of the subject of research. It turned out that there existed a complicated, rich, and different folklore in the very centres of civilization, i.e. in towns. It also became evident that peasant folklore, even in those villages "of definition," far-removed and primitive, was not a sanctuary for primordialities separated from the general process of culture, but on the contrary, took part in the exchange and had so many borrowings from without and connections with the changes in civilization that in scholarship there appeared in turn—which was the expression of its inherent laws of development—false opinions on the secondariness of folklore to the culture of the educated classes of society. This was a factor favourable for revising the old beliefs. The results of the studies and disputes carried with them detailed corrections to the understanding of "folk" of the definition. The factography though, separating itself from the general theoretical reflections was also harmful, for it led nowhere.

In the course of the sorting of the sources there arose the possibility of new points of view, new approaches to folklore, but despite that, and despite the documentary reality, the intention of the

old definition prevails. Let us introduce a certain parallelism here. De Saussure, having in mind the connection between linguistic theories and language reality, once stated that "the point of view creates the object."² In the study of folklore this opinion, which is theoretically true, should be applied in a characteristic way: new points of view, opening up in field work, could not undermine the traditional one, though they were contradictory to it.

This collision becomes the source of the crisis for the whole separation. Oskar Kolberg, attacked by Henryk Biegeleisen in 1886 for uncritical conception of his *Lud (Folk)*,³ as a documentalist conscious of the instability of divisions and observer of the migration of texts, was able to defend himself against every definite reproach made by the critic, but as a folklorist, when forced to prove the identity of his line of studies, he said with resignation:

[...] as we have no wish to be a mythologist so we are neither a linguist nor an archaeologist, nor a psychologist, etc. We only know which materials could be of help for the enrichment of these disciplines, and in accordance with our views we try to provide them.⁴

In such a conception the study of folklore becomes an auxiliary line of study, dealing with sources mainly, but even in this limitation its scientific status is doubtful. The qualification of its range is lacking as well as the answer to the question: in relation to which science is folklore an auxiliary discipline; in relation to ethnology, literary studies, linguistics or to all of them put together and to other disciplines as well? Viewing it in yet a different way: the very separation of study of sources from science was a mistake of method, as there exists an inner, reciprocal dependence between study of sources and theoretical conclusions, between the division of materials and the theoretical division—collecting sources is only a working element of forming answers to definite scientific questions. Unfortunately, this resignation seriously told on the study of folklore in the

² F. Dinneen, *General Linguistics*, New York 1967, p. 331.

³ For the more detailed discussion of this interesting controversy see my *Studia, rozprawy i artykuły Kolberga (Studies, Papers and Articles of Kolberg)*. "Nowe Książki," 1972, No 21.

⁴ O. Kolberg. *Studia, rozprawy i artykuły (Studies, Papers and Articles)*, [in:] *Dzieła wszystkie (Collected Works)*, vol. 63. Wrocław—Poznań 1971. p. 400.

20th century and not only in research on "literary folklore," or folk literature, but also on folk art. It is worth while to notice that in the nearest neighbourhood of the study of literary folklore the main difficulty lies in "the inexplicitness of the basic notion"—that of folk. It is still necessary to enlarge on this comparison: outside Poland the situation is no better. In 1962 Victor Gusev described the differences in the present understanding of folklore, among others in the Soviet Union,⁵ and from that time the differentiation has increased with the methodological progress in research. A year earlier Francis Utley, having studied, using Richards and Ogden's method, the American definitions of folklore formulated by 21 scholars and included in Maria Leach's dictionary, described the differentiation appearing in these definitions as "chaos" and the study of folklore as "a so-called science."⁶

In such a situation, is the study of literary folklore still able to "rise to independence", if I may call it that? And to what extent?

It seems that it can, but it may only be a relative independence, although within limits much wider than those the 19th-century delimitation forswore.

I believe that, in clearing the situation, the starting point must definitely be to weaken the 19th-century understanding of the core of the notion's definition, i.e. of "folk," the notion which continues to be a humanistic sacrum—and this is not to be overlooked—is protected, and from different points of view, too. It would be a subject in itself, but it is necessary to ignore it here, confining oneself to a few reflections. The most important one is undisputable: folk is a historical notion and so is changing with time: while studying folk culture one cannot disregard this changeability even if one limits oneself to the primary intention of the old distinction: folk = = peasant community. This community was different at the beginning of the 19th century, different at its end, and is still different in the

⁵ V. Gusev, *Folklor. Historia i aktualne znaczenia terminu (Folklore. History and the Contemporary Meanings of the Term)*, transl. by T. Zielichowski, "Literatura Ludowa," 1974, No 4/5.

⁶ F. Utley, *Literatura ludowa — definicja operacyjna (Folk Literature—Operative Definition)*, transl. by E. Aumer and M. Waliński, "Literatura Ludowa," 1974, No 1.

second half of the 20th century. Moreover, such folk never existed in isolation from other subcultures, and its "lore" never was a sphere isolated from the exclusive culture. In Poland sources have been providing evidence on this from the 18th century, and detailed observations of the circulation of texts made by field workers from the 19th century. In other words, not only today, but also previously literary folklore was a complex entity coming into being through exchange and choice. Such a whole emerges from Kolberg's *Lud* and such a whole should have emerged as an objective subject of study since the 19th century. The matter would have been also undisputable if field workers had indeed studied the whole oral repertoire of the local peasant group, but both they and their informants only made choice from those actual wholes. The direction and censorship of the choice was determined by two basic criteria: the genological and culturological ones. Let us stop for the time being by the second criterion.

In brief: what was looked for in peasant culture was found there, while what was not looked for was ignored as being accidental, even when it concerned the sacra and profana of this culture, if only it was possible to include them in the process of civilization. That is why field workers were not specially interested in the genuinely live folklore of Christian origin (Karłowicz, who was well acquainted with European studies, also disregarded it) or, on the other hand, in the pattern of erotica, which was equally live in tradition, since it was considered by them to be a vulgar reflection of court demoralization. What was sought for was the primordial noble peasant culture with admissible, though metaphorical, frivolity. To this there was a genological limitation added: the reflections of this culture were sought in oral texts since folk were at one time illiterate, and only in those texts which, according to collectors, constituted the folkloristic equivalent of the genology of literary studies.

Thus, from the moment when it became possible to speak about actual research on folklore those two have not cohered: the established model and reality, i. e. the established image of primordial culture and accompanying it educational model of a peasant, and the authentic picture of the culture of a definite village which has been studied and the real patterns of life and behaviour upheld

among the peasants of that village. Some interesting collisions were borne from this incoherence. Let us return to the example already mentioned: Biegeleisen, with the eye of a positivist, discovers the non-critical character of the documentary workshop of Oskar Kolberg, then an elderly gentleman who had been brought up in the Romantic epoch. At the same time he accuses Kolberg, who could not record rural folklore otherwise than with external borrowings and influences, of including in his *Lud* "artistic creations," texts which were non-peasant in the choice of expressions or phrases, or texts which were non-folk in their "pattern of melody," i. e. connected with civilization, courts, towns. The type of folklore which Biegeleisen expected simply did not exist in the region studied. At this point of the dispute it is necessary to acknowledge that it was Kolberg who was a positivist, since he respected cultural facts, the complicated picture of culture in local communities. It is impossible to reject his point of view.

But it is also impossible to reject the oppositional standpoint of Biegeleisen, for whom literary folklore, accumulated in collections, was to reflect "genuinely folk" elements. This intention, authoritative and for various reasons difficult for scientific discussion, has not weakened up to now, although it is not formulated in that way today. It has various variants which can be translated to the language of particular methodological trends, or else it is directly formulated and does not require theoretical motives, as it appeals to cultural tradition and to intuitive choice. Therefore, despite the conviction that the literary folklore of the country which has already been accumulated and is being collected now is a whole consisting of different, deeper and shallower strata, the right to study also these shallower, i. e. chronologically new strata, having clearer relationships and connections with the civilization and differing also in their form, is not always respected.

What is important is not only the study of folklore, but also its preservation, planning of its development, connecting science with contemporary cultural reality. Thus we should deal with present phenomena and authors helped by the folklorist who is an organizer of culture, conscious of what is original in tradition—with production of objects which are "in the folk style," with works written in a dialect even if the dialect is not being spoken any more,

with the attempts to uphold traditional ritual pageants together with their textual repertoires, which are neither rituals today nor do they become actual folk feasts.

It seems that all these, originating from the traditional study of folklore, are leading in the direction of changing creativity into production and we can exclude them from the present considerations.

The paradox lies in the fact that living folk culture has found itself outside, as it were, the subject of the study of folklore.

Peasant culture is still, or is again, the source of new and different inspirations and this is not primitive but contemporary culture with all its present-day dependencies and complications, with all its strata. At the same time it can be seen that that sphere does not tally with the traditionally distinguished folklore. The current notion of folk culture is still valuable as a source. It fascinates social consciousness as a specific sacrum, which can hardly be described precisely, while folklore in the real form it was given by the already out-of-date programmes of cultural changes and collectors' later documentation, is today the exact contradiction of its own essence, i. e. of *authenticity*. At present it is inauthentic. It discourages research-workers, originators of culture and its recipients, because it is not a whole consisting of real links but a whole which is artificial in this composition and in this shift in time, deliberately incomplete and isolated from the life process of changes. The 19th-century design of a peasant's portrait shows through this whole. The design, and not the actual portrait, because in the 19th century the peasant's fate was also involved in all the external dependencies, connections with the court, town, and Church, and since life was involved in those relationships it is difficult to presume that a peasant's knowledge of life did not take them into account, and—going further—that this consciousness did not manifest itself in forms of culture, its distinct features, absorptions and adaptations. If one remembers this truth, well documented by ethnographical collections, it is necessary to give some thought to the motivation of the theoretical division between folklore and folklorism, which has been spreading throughout Europe for over ten years. This division presumes that folklore is an ancient primitive culture, a closed whole, while folklorism is a new phenomenon (trend?

movement? industry?), which is adaptable, authentic or programmed. Regardless of differences in opinions on the subject of folklorism itself,⁷ if we assume to exclude from that range everything that is the serial production of “folk style” and may be made in the folk spirit but not necessarily in the country and by peasants, thus excluding simply all this which is not genuine art, nor expression of individuality but professional production, then—having only the authentic country creative work in mind—we can ask about the need and justification of the division itself. Where definitely is the border in time and space and did the interior really exist on the other side or was it only a definite country area of cultural exchange? These are simply present-day questions as folk culture is now viewed in terms of change. In the perspectives accessible for research ethnology abandoned the question on genesis and the hypothetical models of primordality. The division into folklore and folklorism may be useful as directing an amateur movement but not as an operation in scientific arrangement.

I propose to isolate first of all cultural conceptions (even the useful ones as primitivism and the interior, the mythical *centrum securitatis*) and then, while putting aside the studies of the opposition for the time being, to place emphasis on the connections. In other words, to acknowledge that folklore is simply a *part of culture*, and as such it must be studied from the point of view of the theory of culture. Such an understanding also implies a postulate for analyzing the connections between the parts (i. e. of folklore) and the whole (i. e. of culture) on the same plane, basic and undisputable, as I believe, and marked out by questions about humanistic meaning, patterns of life: both those which were created in country communities and expressed in local tradition, characteristic of this part of general culture, and those which were created for such communities but outside them, with the intention of imposing or modelling local

⁷ Among many works on the subject the following can be found: H. Moser, *Folklorismus in unserer Zeit*, “Zeitschrift für Volkskunde,” 1962; H. Bausinger, *Folklorismus jako mezinárodní jev*, “Národopisné Aktuality,” 1970, No 7; J. Burszta, *Kultura ludowa — folklorizm — kultura narodowa*, “Kultura i Społeczeństwo,” 1969, No 4; O. Sirovátka, *Folklorismus jako jev současné kultury*. [in:] *Tradiace lidové kultury v životě socialistické společnosti*, Brno 1974; B. Beneš, *Misto folkloru a pololidové tvorby v současnosti*, *ibidem*.

patterns. In such a view country folklore is not the only folk subculture. Townspeople, living in different conditions, passed on a different practical wisdom, creating a subculture as a whole, but subculture which was, like the country one, regionally differentiated (Warsaw folklore or old Lvov folklore, and such like), transmitting particular traditions of class or professional subcultures which are not very clear today. Undoubtedly no objections will be raised at distinguishing miners' or bargemen's folklore. Not everybody though, will accept e. g. distinguishing a student subculture as a folk subculture, although students have created their own traditions and it would certainly be possible, taking the title of Kolberg's series as an example, to write a work entitled "Students. Their Customs, Way of Life, Speech, Traditions, Proverbs, Ceremonies, Witchcraft, Games, Songs, Music, and Dances." Similarly, following Piotr Bogatyrev's idea,⁸ it is possible to distinguish the subculture of the theatrical circle, its old and still lively folklore; or finally, to make an attempt at describing the already closed history of the subculture of the nobility and gentry. Stefan Czarnowski once saw the need to do it and Janusz Maciejewski has taken up this subject recently.⁹

In such cases as the above mentioned the violation of "folk" of the definition may raise objections. If, however, we distinguish the underworld's folklore as a specific and permanent subculture, objections will be raised not to violating "folk" but to including this part in the whole. The objection can be summarized as follows: it is not culture but lack of culture. For the idea of culture is generally felt to be a positive and normative value. But this means confusing educational optics with scientific one, that of people actively engaged in social work with that of the research-worker. Of course, we accept the educational views, but in science we cannot overlook the fact that the underworld has its own patterns of humanism which one has to become acquainted with. They are more complicated than they seem to be from the outside and it is not accidental that

⁸ P. Bogatyrev, *Souvislosti tvorby. Cesty k struktuře lidové kultury a divadla*, vybral a uspořádal J. Kolár, Praha 1971.

⁹ J. Maciejewski, *Folklor środowiskowy. Sposób jego istnienia, cechy wyodrębniające. (Na przykładzie folkloru szlacheckiego XVII i XVIII w.) (Environmental Folklore)*, [in:] *Problemy socjologii literatury (Problems of Literature Sociology)*, ed. by J. Sławiński, Wrocław 1971.

representatives of the underworld distinguish its members by the name of "man."¹⁰ In the social arrangement a criminal group constitutes an extreme example of a subculture but after all, also in the country folklore the patterns of life and moral ideas which accompany them differed quite sharply from the norms of general culture.

These are examples of subcultures already formed in the process of history. Are new ones coming into existence in the quickly changing society? The conviction that they are is becoming stronger. It is an open field for research. New subcultures are being looked for in sports stadium communities,¹¹ in the youth pop culture,¹² in the anonymous leaflet works accompanying dramatic political events, etc.

Let us pass to the final question: which literary forms, characteristic of subculture interest the research-worker? According to tradition: oral literature. In Utley's survey this is the most unanimous conviction. Let us accept it for the time being. But—what type of oral literature? Peasant tradition did not create any normative formulated poetics. These criteria had to be applied to folklore externally, i. e. from literary studies of the Romantic period when the belief in the superiority of poetry as well as the old conviction about the epic poem being the highest form were still alive. Therefore it was poetry that was mainly collected and folk epic poetry from the interior that was so urgently looked for. In course of time there arose an interest in prose, if its fiction (in fairy-tales, fables, legends, traditions) could transmit artistic forms of wisdom. Thus the studied reality was also properly camouflaged from the point of view of the forms of utterances and genology.

¹⁰ Research of the underworld's subculture is carried out mainly by lawyers and recently also by Polish philologists. Certain insight into possibility of cultural analysis of literary texts circulating in the underworld is given by A. Wołczek, *Piosenki i wiersze w zbiorach młodocianych przestępców* (*Songs and Poems in the Collections of Juvenile Delinquents*), "Literatura Ludowa," 1972, No 2.

¹¹ S. Barańczak, "Nasza wola — Polska gola!" (*O transparentach kibiców piłkarskich*) (*On Banners of Football Fans*), [in:] *Formy literatury popularnej* (*Forms of Popular Literature*), ed. by A. Okopień-Sławińska, Wrocław 1973.

¹² G. Melly, *Revolt into Style. The Pop Arts in Britain*, London 1972. See also S. Magala, *Nowy folklor. Próba syntezy* (*New Folklore. Attempt at Synthesis*), "Literatura Ludowa," 1974, No 6.

Perhaps if the study of folklore were to come into existence today, less importance would be attached to the criterion of literary fiction and to verse form of epic. Aesthetic norms and the public's needs change. Since non-fiction literature develops unchallenged—as literature—why cannot folk wisdom, or “lore,” be analyzed through studying authentic peasant tales? That seems to be even better material. But is it an artistic composition? Before we answer, let us ask: in whose understanding? In the understanding of a research-worker there is no reason to question the artistic values of an authentic tale if they are there. In the 20th century Karl von Sydow incorporated such tales into the traditionally distinguished folklore, dividing them into more fictitious (“fabulata”) and less fictitious (“memorata”).¹³

But the question: is it an artistic composition according to peasant understanding? is difficult to deal with. Does such an understanding exist? Which criteria should one apply? Is it possible to reconstruct a system of criteria here? It would be possible to deal with this question by applying a functional analysis, but in the understanding of function there are concealed certain basic divergences, the source of which is the principle of transferring criteria of literary interpretation to the analysis of texts of a given culture and also the inaccurate knowledge of the laws of the living circulation of texts in the environment, as collectors for a long time have been interested in texts and not in circulations in their single and authentic realizations, with the complicated semiotics of representation, situation and reception.

There exist e.g. among “charms” texts of fiction in verse form which can be accepted as magic poetry. But is this really so? I have recently compared one of these “charms” in its 16th-, 19th- and 20th-century versions.¹⁴ Both the speaker and the listener of the text, i.e. the quack and the patient, treat the function of uttering in a strictly practical way as it is the application of an

¹³ K. von Sydow, *Kategorien der Prosa-Volksdichtung*, [in:] *Selected Papers in Folklore*, Copenhagen 1948.

¹⁴ Cz. Hernas, *Upadająca kultura (The Decaying Culture)*, [in:] F. Kotuła, *Ślady przeszłości (Traces of the Past)*, in print.

illusionary technique whose value is measured only by its efficiency. From possible aesthetic experiences fear, which is perhaps more intensive than in normal medical interventions, is the only experience which can be taken into consideration. In the apocryphal tale about Jesus Christ's wanderings with "Peter-Paul" the fictitious elements are only an appeal to sacral powers, and thus fiction is an organic and fundamental characteristic of peasant speech, or "langue" according to Bogatyrev and Jakobson, while the verse form of this text is a secondary arrangement and exclusively mnemonic, introduced in order to memorize it better. It was not present in the texts of the 16th century. The introduction of mnemonic arrangement though, resulted in effect in the folk poem.

Thus the final qualification depends on which point of view is accepted here: whose point of view.

The doubts of the literary folklore research-worker concern not only the genological choice, which has been made in scientific tradition, but also the basic criterion, i. e. the conviction that we only reconstruct folklore from oral literature.

At one time this conviction was justified, as it conformed with cultural reality, texts were transmitted orally. If however, the criterion was maintained longer than the actual enriched forms of distribution, it was because it also reflected the complicated opposition of literate centres of civilization and peasants in the interior, i. e. of civilization and primitive culture. It can be noticed that in Utley's survey this criterion survived from the chaos of different definitions. But is its survival till the present day apt?

As far back as we can look into the studies of Polish folklore we can see various types of connections emerging between literature and oral tradition of the village, town, court, Church, Poland and Europe. In motifs and wandering texts, not necessarily read, sometimes listened to, a continuous choice was being made, local variants of tales were being created and remained in the tradition if they were accepted by the local group. Together with the progress of education in the 19th century, the influence of printed sources on tradition only increased. Today such a source is the newspaper which, as research has proved, gives materials for changing genres of live folk prose: for sensational and horror stories, reminiscences, tales,

anecdotes.¹⁵ It seems that today prose, as a form of utterance, interests both folk authors and their public more than poetry. Memoirs and letters written by peasants are quickly sold out, as one finds in them what previously was to be found in the editions of folk songs, while folk songs in book-form, on the radio and television interest the public less. We cannot deny love letters, letters written by emigrants, memoirs, recollective tales their folkloristic representativeness. They are a more authentic source of knowledge about local subcultures than songs, proverbs, puzzles, fairy-tales. They cannot be ingored, although they have not been transmitted orally.

The differences between the written and oral texts are obviously not irrelevant for research (it would be worth-while to study e.g. one personal autobiographical story recorded in two ways: on tape and in writing), but does the border of the definition run here and is everything that is not transmitted orally the borderland of the definition? This is to be proved.

Let us consider still one more typically new phenomenon. From the 19th century a new trend has been developing of the so-called folk writers of various categories, who, making use of the traditional local folklore ("language" is thus preserved to different degrees) create personal texts (the meaning of parole being thus increased), but till the present day this group includes both literate and illiterate authors. For all of them the importance of "language" in the sense of necessary local approval for the author is also changing, simply because rural local people are subject to change. Both illiterate and literate authors submit to the pressure of civilization (e.g. to new language norms and patterns): they are organized in a separate club. I think that even while analyzing texts of the peasant subculture the criterion of the "orality" cannot hold as the border of the definition but only as an internal means for arranging these forms. Let alone transfer this criterion to the analysis of town folklore where for ages a street leaflet has been one of the basic forms of transmitting texts.

¹⁵ Cf. D. Simonides, *Powstania śląskie we współczesnych opowiadaniach ludowych (Silesian Revolts in Contemporary Folk Tales)*, Opole 1972; K. D. Kadłubiec, *Gawędziarz cieszyński Józef Jeżowicz (The Cieszyn Story-teller Józef Jeżowicz)*, Ostrawa 1973.

In whichever way we understand the study of folklore, it is not only a science but also a part of culture. When it separated in the 19th century it was a part of the basic programme of changes in culture. Today both knowledge of the subject and folk itself as well as programmatic intentions have changed. If there is less and less 19th-century peasants, it does not mean that there are no country folk or various subcultures differing from the officially programmed educational pattern of culture. We do not have to look for these subcultures in the Białystok countryside, they can be looked for just as well in the docks of Szczecin, in a working class environment. We should simply consider the opinion expressed at the World Congress of Folklorists in Helsinki reasonable: "As informants do not tell the same texts as before, one should record what they narrate at present."

Transl. by *A. Korzeniowska*