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"Biblijno-apokryficzne narracje w literaturze staropolskiej do końca XVI wieku", Maria Adamczyk, Poznań 1980 : [recenzja]

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Book Reviews

Comptes rendus de livres

Maria Adamczyk, *Biblijno-apokryficzne narracje w literaturze staropolskiej do końca XVI w. (Biblical-Apocryphal Narratives in Polish Literature to the End of the 16th Cent.)*, Poznań 1980.

The fascination with medieval and 16th-century biblical and apocryphal works, to which the author admits in the introduction, is not the only or even the most important cause of her scholarly interest in this extremely complicated group of biblically based stories. The need for a comprehensive study of this area of literature seems significantly more important. The studies, articles, and editorial achievements of A. Brückner, S. Dobrzycki, S. Vrtel-Wierczyński, J. Krzyżanowski and other earlier scholars have not been continued. Their highly-respected studies were usually limited to individual works, and they seldom attempted a more synthetic outline of the apochryphae. Moreover, these scholars' interest did not include problems connected with the peculiar "literariness" of the apocryphal works (the creative rules embodied in them, the norms, the ensemble of directives) that gives these works their own narrative technique and manner, characteristic of the belle-lettres treatment of the canonic plots that were symbiotically joined to the apocryphal material.

Maria Adamczyk's book was intended to fill this gap, using detailed research to establish the characteristics of the class of works described in the title as biblical-apocryphal narratives. The starting point for establishing a typology as well as for a historical poetics, is, as we read:

The recreation of the genotype, common to the apocryphal works, composed of the different norms and rules generating the poetics of its particular phenotypical realizations. The superordinate, genotypical norms that stimulate the individual creations include associated rules of varying origins that derive collectively from the manners of organization suggested by biblical genres, by so-called apochryphae proper (understood as the marginal texts of the Holy Scriptures in their full, complex,

historically changing version), by literary (especially ones close to historiographic forms) and quasi-literary conventions, shaped, mainly by the written and oral art of the church.

The first group of problems concerns the general postulates for ordering the typology and genology. The drive to separate out a set of principled and mutually comparable works is joined to an attempt to make uniform or at least to organize the functioning genre names. The initial view of Polish apochryphae adopted, against the background of the then contemporary narrative forms, practically forces the author to make a critical review of the previously proposed classifications and terminologies. (This is particularly the case as regards Julian Krzyżanowski's *Romans polski XVI wieku*.) The final body of works selected, called arbitrarily apochryphae, includes *Rozmyślenia przemyskie*, *Historia trzech króli* (in the Polish version by Jan of Hildesheim), *Istoryja o świętym Józefie*, *Patryjarsze Starego Zakonu*, *Historyja bardzo cudna... o stworzeniu nieba i ziemi* by K. Pussman, *Sprawa chędogo o Męce Pana Chrystusowej*, *Ewangelia Nikodema*, *Kazania o Maryi Pannie czystej* by Paterek, *Żywot Pana Jezusa Krysta* by B. Opeć, and the recently discovered *Rozmyślanie dominikańskie*. The terminology problems turned out to be unusually complicated. The author questions the appropriateness of some of the genre designations (*romans*) and indicates other more appropriate ones (*historia*). Ultimately, however, she accepts the existence of a varied terminology that results directly from the impossibility of giving unambiguous definitions for this group of narrative works. Even if "there is no doubt that in the case of the works concerned we are dealing with narratives that, in the broadest sense, make biblical plots with the apocryphal transmissions they stimulated the object of their tales."

Further definitions and orderings within the area of Polish apocryphae are connected with reconstructions of the apochrypha category itself, examined in the historical process of its semantic changes. The problem of the apochryphae in church history is not only a variously formulated opposition of canonic and non-canonic writings. From the point of view of literature the most important problem is the broadening of the meaning of the concept apochrypha, which at first (up to the 15th century A. D.) included clear imitations, pastiches of the poetry from canonic

volumes. Later during the final stages of the history of the genre, however, the term designated various writings stimulated by the Bible and extra-canonic works (*apochrypha proper*). Maria Adamczyk views this broadening of the denotation from mimetic texts *sui generis* to individual narrative realizations of plots from the Bible as the most characteristic line ordering Polish narratives. She also arranges them in accordance with their consciously adopted degree and type of dependence on the model.

The chapter "Under the Sign of the Poetics of Pastiche. Quasi-canonical Biblical-Apochryphal Narratives" presents two texts (*Historia o świętym Józefie* and *Historyja bardzo cudna*) that peculiarly fill out the biblical transmissions, while respecting the "manner of speech" proper to the "holy document." Thus, they create a skilful illusion of the truthfulness of the events described. The author shows the similarities and differences between the methods of "filling out" the Scripture used. She also notes a variation, a peculiar development in the attitudes of the text producers, a shift from "transparent" narrative (*Istoria o Józefie*) to narrative including a commentator-exegist role (*Historyja bardzo cudna*).

A second line of development of the biblical-apocryphal narratives is the resignation from the imitative poetics in favour of varied narrative constructions stimulated by the Bible. The chapter "In the Realm of Open and Justified Marriages of Canonic and Non-Canonic Plots," which discusses this group of works, has the extremely significant subtitle: "Successions of Regulations of Truth and Probability in the Process of Shaping the World Presented in the Apocryphal Narratives." The subtitle underlines the succession of the mimetic approach of the authors by a historical ideal of a strict and cognitive authenticity, the change from the position of a narrator with a self-imposed function as an inspired medium for the holy word to one of a reporter of holy history, responsible for the confirmed, authentic truth.

The inclusion of this type of texts (*Rozmyślenia przemyskie* are an example) in the field of apochryphae agrees with the broadening (about the 12th or 13th centuries) of the definition of an apochrypha. Previously, it had meant a non-canonic Early Christian text, but now it denoted texts created with the intention of seeking principled details given in the arguments of the Bible. The author (calling

on the extensive bibliography on the subject and using the most representative examples) devotes a great deal of the evolution in meaning of the concept of apochrypha and its different axiological character, connected with the treatment of the older apocryphal transmissions a principled and authentic "complements" to the scriptural texts.

Referring to an authoritative extra-canonical source, understood in this manner, is the first method for proving the truthfulness of the facts described in the narratives under discussion. An important element of the construction of the arrangement of the plot, done before the reader's eyes, is the very consideration of the truthfulness of the motive or the facts given, as well as the conscious emphasis of the facultativeness of certain elements of the plot. A large role in the reconstruction of biblical history by searching for information not revealed by the Scripture should be ascribed to attempts to specify and to the tradition of presenting the world in (the then contemporary) dimensions of historical reality. Referring to prefigured truths, discovering ones "hidden" by the Scripture also added to the deductive style of searching for truth.

The final element in the chain of apocryphal narratives arranged by the author in a logical order ranging from canonic to pseudo-canonic texts are the so-called hagiographic legends, such as *Historia trzech króli* or the history of Mary's parents, Joachim and Anna, compiled by Jan of Koszyczki and Mikołaj of Wilkowiecko. The lowest degree of critical verification of the non-canonic material appears in these works, and they also aim most clearly for belles-lettre attractiveness.

The typological ordering of Polish apochryphae allows the author to discuss the morphological structure of the particular types of narrative, to follow the organization of the statements, to grasp their complex "literariness." In the chapter on the "types and styles of narrative" we remain in the realm of the series of works still subject to typological divisions. First, closed compositions, such as *Rozmyślania przemyskie*, that aim to make a complete presentation of a New Testament history are distinguished. The detailed analysis of the narrative structure of *Rozmyślania przemyskie* reveals the role of the compilation's author, the "host" of the work, the subject of the creative activities. The primacy of knowledge over the art ex-

plains such peculiar structural characteristics of the text as the plane rendering and lack of a hierarchy of the elements in the world depicted, the lack of anticipation and the atomization combined with the facultativeness of places occupied by the separate parts of the work.

Works which resign from a complete presentation of a history and aim at a moralizing character, have a totally different type of narrative structure. Such works (Paterek's sermon, *Sprawa chędogo, Rozmyślenia dominikańskie*) constructed according to the rules for sermons, homilies, passion tracts, or meditations, constitute a kind of opposition to the belles-lettres, radically uniplanar narrative continuity of *Rozmyślenia przemyskie*, although the author recognizes the gradation of the contents of their narrative potential, as for instance Paterek's marian sermon and the *Sprawa chędogo* which is closer to folk preaching.

The range of apocryphal-biblical narratives subjected to the type of typological study in Maria Adamczyk's book betrays not only extreme examples such as the mimetic type on the one hand and the hagiographic legends on the other undoubtedly are. A series of intervening constructions, a series of types as well as particular variations of plot-types generated by biblical genres also appear. Moreover, this type of scholarly exploration of Polish apochryphae by presenting the processes shaping the literary elements (broadly understood), the compositional structures, and narrative techniques and manners could be a good stimulant to awaken the dormant Polish studies of Medieval literature. If the author wished, it could also be the beginning of an extensive historical panorama of the multiple meanings of the complex of phenomena formed by the epics stimulated by the Bible.

Sum. by *Adam Karpiński*

Transl. by *John Lee*

Alina Nowicka-Jeżowa, **Madrygały staropolskie (Les Anciennes madrigaux polonaises)**, Wrocław 1978. Coll.: *Studia Staropolskie (Etudes sur l'ancienne littérature polonaise)*.

Le livre d'Alina Nowicka-Jeżowa est une étude analytique consacrée à la lyrique méliques amoureuse au XVI^e et au XVII^e siècles. Le