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Genology Games with Tradition Old Polish Menippean Satire in the Context of Its Ancient Genre Models

Abstract: The aim of this article is to describe the Old Polish Menippean satire and to indicate its relation with ancient examples of the genre. The Old Polish Menippean satire, similarly to its ancient genre models, is satirical and comic, but it is innovative in its utilitarian and didactic character.

Key words: Old Polish Menippean satire, ancient Menippean satire, prosimetrum, imitation, innovation

Ancient Menippean satire, hard to encapsulate within the genre canons, dates back to Menippus of Gadara. He was a cynic philosopher who lived in the 3rd century BC, and his short biography can be found in the doxography of Diogenes Laërtius *Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers* (VI 99–101).

Menippus, also a Cynic, was by descent a Phoenician – a slave, as Achaicus in his treatise on *Ethics* says. Diocles further informs us that his master was a citizen of Pontus and was named Baton. But as avarice made him very resolute in begging, he succeeded in becoming a Theban. There is no seriousness in him; but his books overflow with laughter, much the same as those of his contemporary Meleager. [...] However, the writings of Menippus the Cynic are thirteen in number: *Necromancy; Wills; Epistles artificially composed as*

if by the gods; Replies to the physicists and mathematicians and grammarians; A book about the birth of Epicurus; The School's reverence for the twentieth day. Beside other works.¹

It is assumed that Menippean satire is of Greek origin, yet, the scholars also mention possible oriental influences upon the genre.² Out of all pieces by Menippus only one fragment of prose has been preserved³ as well as a note about Menippus in the work of Athenaios from Naucratis.⁴ However, we know that this cynic philosopher was also the author of (apart from the works listed by Diogenes Laërtius) *Symposion*, *Sale of Diogenes* and *Arkesilaos*, where he most probably also dealt with the topic of the feast.⁵

The genre owes its name to Menippus, who is claimed to have created its classical form, which was next reconstructed and creatively copied by Varro in Roman literature, and by Lucian of Samosata in Greek literature.⁶ It is, however, also possible that the first representative of the genre was Antisthenes,⁷ one of Socrates

¹ D.L., VI 101 (Diogenes Laërtius: *Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers*, vol. 2. Trans. R. Drew Hicks. Harvard 1925, Loeb Classical Library).

² The output of Arab literature also comprises comical dialogues on philosophical topics, written with the use of prose and verse. See considerations of K. Korus: *Grecka proza poklasyczna* [Greek Post-Classical Prose]. Kraków 2003, pp. 32–33. For Jewish and Oriental beginnings of prosometric forms, compare inspiring remarks of G. Highet: *The Anatomy of Satire*. Princeton–New Jersey 1972, pp. 36–37. Highet also refers to earlier findings of M. Hadas included in his book *Ancilla to Classical Reading*. New York 1954, p. 58. Considerations of more general nature on the complex, or rather ambiguous relationships between Roman satire and foreign influences; see: H. Szelest: “Stosunek satyry rzymskiej do wpływów greckich i orientalnych w Rzymie [Approach of Roman Satire towards Greek and Oriental Influences in Rome].” *Meander* 1965, vol. 20, pp. 359–370.

³ See Ath., 14, p. 664 e (prose quotation from *Arkesilaos*).

⁴ *Ibidem*, 1, p. 32 e.

⁵ Considerations concerning the output of Menippus, see: T. Sinko: *Literatura grecka* [Greek Literature], vol. 2, part 1. Kraków 1974, pp. 22–23; *Literatura Grecji starożytnej* [Ancient Greek Literature]. Ed. H. Podbielski. Vol. 2: *Proza historyczna – Krasomówstwo – Filozofia i nauka – Literatura chrześcijańska* [Historical Prose – Oratory – Philosophy and Science – Christian Literature]. Lublin 2005, p. 792; R.L. Hunter: *Menippus*, OCD 3. Oxford–New York 1996, pp. 959–960; R. Piętka: “Menippus i inni. O początkach satyry menippejskiej [Menippus and Others. About the Beginnings of Menippean Satire].” *Meander* 1998, vol. 53, pp. 439–444.

⁶ A.M. Komornicka lists the “literary descendants” of Menippus. The following names are among them: Lucian, Varro, Petronius and Apuleius. And as regards the early modern writers: Rabelais, Swift, Voltaire, Erasmus Roterodamus and Huxley, cf. A.M. Komornicka: “Satyra [Satire].” In: *Słownik rodzajów i gatunków literackich* [The Dictionary of Literary Genres and Sub-Genres]. Eds. S. Gazda Charles-Picard, S. Tynecka-Makowska. Krakow 2006, pp. 675–678.

⁷ Antisthenes – his life and work, see: D.L., VI 1–19. Also cf. *Literatura Grecji starożytnej*, pp. 775–776. First cynic philosophers coming from Antisthenes school, propagating Socratic model of education, called their lectures given in public places – diatribes. Most probably the lectures were popular with the audience and involved active dialogue with the listeners, see: *Literatura Grecji starożytnej...*, pp. 790–792.

disciples. The following persons are also related to the Menippean satire – Heraclitus of Pontus, who “mixed up serious and frolic things and gave up playing his zither and took up writing satirical poetry”⁸ and Bion Borysthenes from Dnieper (3rd century BC), who is thought to be the creator of the characteristic style of the early cynic diatribe.⁹

The introduction of the name of the genre is attributed to a Roman writer and scientist Marcus Terentius Varro (who lived in the 1st century BC), who entitled his satirical works *Saturae Menippeae*, thus, underlining the relationship between his works and Menippus and his prosometric pieces. Menippus remained a source of artistic inspiration for Varro; however, the latter refers to his predecessor in the spirit of creative imitation (*imitatio*), or maybe even emulation (*aemulatio*).

“Hybrid” and aesthetically heterogenic Menippean satire was not popular in Classical poetics, though it is commonly known that *genus mixtum* played an important role in ancient literary practice. Ancient literature would generally disregard the existence of “impure” genres, or in other words, genres difficult to classify unequivocally. Menippean satire comprises formal contrasts (*prosimetrum*), content as well as aesthetic paradoxes and escapes the *decorum* principle which should be replaced with the term already applied in the reference to the Menippean satire by many researchers, namely with *discors concordia*.¹⁰

Early modern critics have filled the gap in the ancient literary vocabulary and provided the name for the actually existing genre, substantiated by the literary pieces written by Varro, Seneca, Petronius, Apuleius and others. In the course of research, a convincing (to a large extent) opinion has arisen, according to which the “Menippean satire” gained the status of a literary genre as late as in the Renaissance thanks to the literary work published by a famous philologist and humanist, Justus Lipsius, who in 1581 published his work with its three-fold title: *Satyra Menippea. Somnium. Lusus in nostri aevi criticos*,¹¹ directly prompted by Seneca’s *Apocolocyntosis*. The satire was widely read and successfully followed, a piece

⁸ See: D.L., IX 17.

⁹ Compare: D.L., IV 7. About the role and significance of Bion, also see: T. Sinko: *Literatura grecka...*, pp. 18–21; J. Rostropowicz: “Bion.” In: *Słownik pisarzy antycznych* [Dictionary of Ancient Writers]. Ed. A. Świderkówna. Warszawa 1990, p. 118; B. Kupis: “Diatriba cynicko-stoicka a diatriba sekstyjczyków w Rzymie” [Diatribe of Cynics and Stoics and Diatribe of Sextus Disciples in Rome]. *Meander* 2000, vol. 55, pp. 139–140; *Literatura Grecji starożytnej...*, pp. 790–792 (here, we can read that a diatribe has become a popular literary genre later adopted by the Roman stoics – Seneca and Cicero).

¹⁰ See: P. Dronke: *Verse with Prose. From Petronius to Dante. The Art and Scope Mixed Form*. Cambridge, Mass–London 1994, p. 5.

¹¹ See: J.C. Relihan: “On the Origin of ‘Menippean Satire’ as the Name of a Literary Genre.” *Classical Philology* 1984, vol. 79, p. 228. Also compare considerations of R. Piętka: “Satyra menippejska i późnoantyczne prosimetrum łacińskie [Menippean Satire and Late Antique Latin prosimetrum].” *Meander* 2001, vol. 56, p. 268. The article of J.C. Relihan is my source of information about the publications of other Menippean satires in the 16th and 17th century.

Sardi Venales. Satyra menippea. In huius seculi homines plerosque inepte eruditos published in 1612 and written by Petrus Cunaeus can only confirm the statement. A French satire *La vertu du catholicon*, published earlier in 1594, in later editions was known as *Satyre Ménippée*.

Old Polish Menippean satire draws on two sources: the ancient tradition reconstructed by the humanists (Justus Lipsius is an outstanding example here) and from contemporary social and political events. The then current events or trends laid behind the selected topics while the ancient patterns influenced the texts on the aesthetic level. Old Polish Menippean satire is not so widely represented nor is it so commonly known as the ancient satire, but it also comprises literary works that are interesting, worth being noticed, read and thoroughly analysed.¹²

Among Old Polish Menippean satire the one that is deemed to be one of the best is an anonymous satire from the Saxon era: *Małpa-człowiek w cnotach, obyczajach i kroju* [A Monkey-Man of Virtue, Manners and in Fashionable Attire]. It criticizes the Saxon times in the form of a scholastic treatise, which implements, however, the aesthetic assumptions of a Menippean satire with its prosometric form (the piece contains the author's rhymed interruptions and proverbs), with its love to view reality from a carnival perspective, grotesque realism, mixture of language types (official and vulgar, Latin and Polish). From the anonymous satire we can infer that the author was familiar with the Bible, texts of the Apostolic Fathers and, as regards the ancient poets, he quotes Plutarch, Diodorus of Sicily, Seneca and Epicurus.

Another interesting implementation of early modern Menippean satires can be especially found in three anonymous "marital" satires dating back to the 17th century, which were written in compliance with the then prevailing in Europe trends to emphasise the superiority of one of the sexes. Full of erudition, reflecting the social life and customs of the times in a variety of ways, dense with polemics *Złote jarzmo małżeńskie* [The Golden Yoke of Marriage] and its rework *Zona wyćwiczona* [A Trained Wife] and *Gorzka wolność młodzieńska albo odpowiedź na Złote jarzmo małżeńskie* [The Bitter Freedom or a Response to the Golden Yoke of Marriage] preserved in old prints are indeed worth publishing today as for the reason of their comic nature they may appeal not only to the researchers of old literature.

Hercules słowieński [Slavic Hercules] by Jan Szczęsny Herbut, first released in Dobromil in 1612 and next in 1616, falls within the herein discussed category of satires. This satire includes many so far unresolved biographical riddles, but its values derive from legible and meaning-enriching (and therefore enriching its

¹² I have included more detailed analyses of the Old Polish Menippean satires, named here, in the book entitled *Od Herkulesa do „żony wyćwiczonej”. W kręgu staropolskich satyr menippejskich* [From Hercules to a "Trained Wife". In the Circle of Old Polish Menippean Satires]. Poznań 2013.

interpretation) references to *De consolazione philosophiae* by Boethius.¹³ An autobiographical, without doubt polemic, and at the same time maintained in a comforting tone, satire by Herbut uses the motif of a *Hercules in bivio*, a motif also found in *Memorabilia* by Xenophon. *Hercules słowieński* was originally entitled *Gadka Hryca z Fortuną* [The Dialogue between Hryc and Fortune] and the work was originally written by Herbut in prison, after his arrest for the participation in the semi-legal rebellion in Sandomierz in 1608. Although this magnate from Dobromil was sentenced to death for high treason, he managed to avoid the punishment thanks to the intervention on his behalf by Zygmunt Myszkowski, the Great Royal Marshal. During the two years of imprisonment, Herbut created his own version of Hercules at the cross-roads.¹⁴ The plot of *Hercules słowieński* is set in prison and includes the assessment of the political events of the times. Ancient literary pieces remain another important context of interpretations presenting the author's erudition and ability to link the presence with the literary tradition. The prisoner, created in Herbut's work, resembles not as much the young Hercules from the Xenophon's work as he resembles Boethius.¹⁵ What this work shares with *De consolazione philosophiae* is not only the specific position of the prisoner awaiting trial but first of all the genological relations: both pieces are Menippean satires maintained in a comforting tone.¹⁶ Boethius used to seek his consolation in Platonic and Stoic philosophy. He would find good things, goal and happiness in himself and in the conviction that ethical perfection, wisdom and bravery are born in suffering and toil. Song VII from book four names Hercules, among other great mythical heroes, and holds him as the example to follow. Hercules is viewed by Boethius from an allegoric perspective and Hercules' fate only confirms the thesis

¹³ Compare considerations of J. Sokołski: "Hryc, Herkules czy Boecjusz [Hryc, Hercules or Boethius]." In: *Muzy i Hestia. Studia dedykowane Profesor Ludwice Ślękowej w siedemdziesiątą rocznicę urodzin* [Muses and Hestia. Studies dedicated to Professor Ludwika Ślękowa in celebration of her 70th birthday]. Eds. J. Sokołski, M. Cieński. Wrocław 2000, pp. 81–92.

¹⁴ As regards Herbut's participation in a semi-legal rebellion led by Zebrzydowski and his imprisonment, see: W. Łoziński: *Prawem i lewem. Obyczaje na Czerwonej Rusi w pierwszej połowie XVII wieku* [The Right and Left. Customs and Manners in Russia Rubra in the Second Half of the 17th Century]. Vol. 2: *Wojny prywatne* [Private Wars]. Kraków 1960, pp. 127–133.

¹⁵ See: J. Sokołski: *Hryc, Hercules czy Boecjusz*. Also see: idem: "Poemat alegoryczny [Allegorical Poem]." In: *Słownik literatury staropolskiej* [The Dictionary of Old Polish Literature]. Ed. T. Michałowska. Wrocław–Warszawa–Kraków 1998, p. 689.

¹⁶ As regards genre syncretism putting together the Menippean satire, consolation and the Socratic dialogue, apocalypse in *De consolazione philosophiae*, see: A. Kucz: *Dyskurs z Filozofią w „Consolatio philosophiae” Boecjusza* [Discourse with Philosophy in "Consolatio philosophiae" by Boethius]. Katowice 2005, pp. 44–49; A. Kijewska: *Filozof i jego muzy. Antropologia Boecjusza – jej źródła i recepcja* [A Philosopher and His Muses. Boethius' Anthropology – Its Sources and Reception]. Kęty 2011, pp. 188–193. Also compare interesting deliberations on genological tradition in the work of Boethius, binding the motifs and the topics of consolation, visionary, allegorical literature and dialogue with the prosometric form: J. Gruber: *Kommentar zu Boethius „De consolazione philosophiae”*. Berlin–New York 1978, pp. 16–32.

that *In vestra enim situm manu, qualem vobis fortunam formare malitis*.¹⁷ Herburt, similarly to Boethius, uses the dialogue in its ludic form and resorts to prosopopeia and allegory. The poets even had similar life experiences: Boethius – a senator, consul and the father of consuls was accused by Theodoric of the betrayal of the Byzantine Emperor and he was executed.¹⁸ The text of the Latin consolation inspired early modern writers, philosophers; we can infer that it was also inspiring for Herburt.

As another important example of significant achievements of Old Polish literature, we must also include here a political and social satire by Łukasz Opaliński *Coś nowego* [Something New] from 1652. This work, being somewhere between the Menippean satire and pasquinade thanks to its structure of a dialogue and its prosometric form, relates to the best European examples of the genre. If we are to name its early modern sources of inspiration, first of all we need to mention the neo-Latin satire of Justus Lipsius *Satyra menippea. Somnium. Lusus in nostri aevi criticos*. The Opaliński brothers, Krzysztof and Łukasz, during their studies abroad, came across the works of Justus Lipsius, a Leuven philologist and lecturer, who was also a source of inspiration for the Erycius Puteanus – teacher of the two brothers at the time.¹⁹ The bilingual satire by Lipsius (Latin and Greek) reveals close relationships with ancient Menippean satire making parody of meetings and debates of gods, where Seneca's *Apocolocyntosis*, a piece so often quoted by Lipsius, holds a leading position. Łukasz Opaliński wrote a satire in Polish, but he introduced numerous Latin inclusions and Greek words, which are not only to signify the macaronic style, but they may also be viewed as the continuation of aesthetic ideas proposed by western humanists such as Lipsius and Puteanus.²⁰

The central part of Łukasz Opaliński's satire is made up of a pasquinade which ridicules Hieronim Radziejowski, a Great Crown Chancellor, a later "traitor" during the Swedish Deluge, who next appeared in *Potop* [The Deluge], a famous novel by Henryk Sienkiewicz. Radziejowski was sentenced to death, infamy and forfeiture of property by the Marshal Court for high treason, at which time Opaliński

¹⁷ Boeth., *Cons. phil.*, 4, 7.

¹⁸ Biographical details regarding the sentencing of Boethius and his trial, see: A. Kucz: *Dyskurs z filozofią w „Consolatio philosophiae” Boecjusza...*, pp. 17–31; J. Legowicz: "Introduction." In: Boethius: *O pocieszeniu jakie daje filozofia...*, pp. 7–14; A. Kijewska: *Filozof i jego muzy...*, pp. 24–33; S. Swieżawski: *Boethius – ostatni Rzymianin* [Boethius – the Last Roman]. Lwów 1935, pp. 33–56.

¹⁹ About the studies in Leuven and educational achievements of the Opaliński brothers, see: M. Pryshlak: *Państwo w filozofii politycznej Łukasza Opalińskiego* [State in the Political Philosophy of Łukasz Opaliński]. Trans. by G. Chomicki. Kraków 2000, pp. 54–66; A. Sajkowki: *Krzysztof Opaliński wojewoda poznański* [Krzysztof Opaliński – a Voivode in Poznań]. Poznań 1960, pp. 23–34; C. Kunderewicz: *Poglądy filozoficzno-prawne Łukasza Opalińskiego* [Philosophical and Legal Views of Łukasz Opaliński]. Warszawa 1939, pp. 11–16.

²⁰ As regards contacts between the Opaliński brothers with Puteanus, a Latin professor from Leuven, see: S. Rygiel: *Puteanus und die Polen*. Berlin 1913, pp. 61–75.

held the position of the Marshal. The poem is an invective against the Starost of Łomża, but it also includes an apology of the King and the Marshal himself. Public opinion supported Radziejowski and as a proof thereof was a ruling given by the Crown Tribunal, which was in opposition to the King's, and which overruled the judgment of the Marshal Court releasing Radziejowski from the punishment and restoring his honour.²¹

Stanisław Grzeszczuk was of the opinion that Opaliński softened the tone of the pasquinade to obtain temporary political goals such as the strengthening of the King's and the Marshal's authority, gaining support from the wide circles of gentry, usually suspicious and hostile towards the king's court.²² We must agree with the researcher that the selected by the author form of the Menippean satire meets important idea propagating purposes in the literary work.²³ The "scapegrace nature"²⁴ of the poem, suggested by Grzeszczuk, reveals itself in the dialogue structure, the motif of the 'world upside down', parody serving praise and reprimand and these are nothing else but the implementation of the aesthetic assumptions of the Menippean satire. The features of a scapegrace are attributed both to the interlocutor and the narrator in *Coś nowego* and the very figure of a scapegrace would be an example of the successful early modern continuation of the life style and the worldview of an ancient cynic philosopher (such as Menippus in the works of Lucian, for example). A cynic, like a scapegrace, plays the role of an outsider as well as a judge at the same time, who, severe in his judgement, pretty often quite rightly criticises negative aspects of social and political life as well as customs prevailing at his times. The world-view of a cynic, or a scapegrace, propagates contempt for the riches and privileges, it heralds – without doubt utopian – ideas of equality, which often remain in the sphere of dreams impossible to be realised. Overheard by the narrator,²⁵ the interlocutors in Opaliński's satire see the dark sides of the political and social life of the times, and their dialogue sounds ironic and bitter when they talk about their contemporaries or events of the age. The spirit of a Menippean

²¹ The analysis of the decisions issued by the Marshal Court and the ruling of the Constitutional Tribunal, see: L. Kubala: "Proces Radziejowski [The Trial of Radziejowski]." In: Idem: *Szkice historyczne* [Historical Sketches]. Series I and II. Warszawa 1923, pp. 243–253.

²² See: S. Grzeszczuk: "Prekursorski charakter satyry Łukasza Opalińskiego *Coś nowego* [Pioneering character of Łukasz Opaliński's Satire *Coś nowego*]." *Przegląd Humanistyczny* 1959, vol. 3, pp. 83–101. As regards the argument that *Coś nowego* is not only a pasquinade but first of all, a satire portraying the corruption in the Republic of Poland, see: S. Grzeszczuk: "Wstęp [Introduction]." In: Ł. Opaliński: *Wybór pism* [Selection of Letters]. Introduction and compilation S. Grzeszczuk. Wrocław 1959, pp. 101, 104 (BN I 172); J. Sokołowska, K. Żukowska: "Przedmowa [Foreword]." In: *Poeci polskiego baroku* [Poets of Polish Baroque]. Compilation J. Sokołowska, K. Żukowska. Vol. 1. Warszawa 1965, pp. 93–99.

²³ S. Grzeszczuk: *Prekursorski charakter satyry Łukasza Opalińskiego...*, p. 89.

²⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 88.

²⁵ This is an interesting example of atypical point of view upon the reality contained within the Menippean satire.

satire is created via the codewords of the dialogue, the references, parody of heroic epic, viewing the reality through the perspective of a theatre presenting social manners of intermedial nature.

A thorough analysis of *Coś nowego* was carried out by Julian Krzyżanowski who suggested that this work was a pasquinade and not a satire and this suggestion unfortunately influenced further research to a large extent.²⁶ The analysis classified the work between a prosometric Menippean satire and temporary pasquinade and finally Krzyżanowski was of the opinion that the piece was more a pasquinade than it was a Menippean satire, providing, however, no “decisive factor which would settle the dilemma and determine the artistic homogeneity of the entire literary piece.”²⁷ We must remember, though, that the inclusion of an invective addressed at a specific figure into a Menippean satire does not shatter its homogeneity, as it is, by definition, of non-homogeneous nature, and also, the genre development in the course of time includes such examples.

The author who used the invective to serve the purposes of a Menippean satire was Seneca.²⁸ Kept in the spirit of Saturn’s feast, *Apocolocyntosis* criticizes the deceased emperor and ridicules him in an abusive manner. The work constitutes an invective which is not overshadowed by the also present eulogy for Nero or elegiac hexameter. The text was read by the researchers as the poetry of “carnival derision,” which applied frequently used in the Menippean satire the motif of the game²⁹ situated between the elegiac and the vulgar, serious and trivial, reality and utopia and, finally, between the praise and reprimand. Irony and lampoon not only ridicule the emperor, but first of all they are to reveal the cruelty of the power. Omnipresent hyperbolization lays bare the ruthlessness and stupidity of such power. *Apocolocyntosis* may serve for *Coś nowego* as an ideal to follow for depreciation of a commonly known person for further satirical purposes: namely, criticism of the society, institutions or the politics of a country.

²⁶ See: J. Krzyżanowski: “Łukasz Opaliński i jego paszkwil na Radziejowskiego [Łukasz Opaliński and His Pasquinade against Radziejowski].” In: Idem: *Od średniowiecza do baroku*. [From Middle Ages to Baroque]. *Studia naukowo-literackie* [Scientific and Literary Study]. Warszawa 1938, pp. 339–351.

²⁷ Ibidem, p. 342.

²⁸ Analysis of Seneca literary piece, see: H.K. Riikonen: *Menippean Satire as a Literary Genre with Special Reference to Seneca’s “Apocolocyntosis.”* Helsinki 1987; R. Piętka: “Satyra menippejska jako gatunek pre-powieściowy (Na przykładzie utworów Warrona i Seneki) [Menippean Satire as Novel Pioneering Genre on the Basis of the Works of Varro and Seneca].” *Meander* 1998, vol. 53, pp. 603–619; E. Wesołowska: “Rozkosz zemsty w *Apocolocyntosis* [Pleasure of Revenge in “Apocolocyntosis”].” In: Eadem: *Rzymska literatura wygnañcza u schyłku republiki, początków pryncypatu i wczesnego cesarstwa* [Roman Exilic Literature at the Late Roman Republic and Beginning of Principate and Early Empire]. Vol. 1: *Cicero i Seneka* [Cicero and Seneca]. Poznań 2003, pp. 226–232.

²⁹ As regards the frequent application of the game motif in the Menippean satire, see: H.K. Riikonen: *Menippean Satire as a Literary Genre...*, p. 48.

Another literary work inspired by Seneca's output is an anti-war pasquinade *Julius exclusus e coelis*, attributed to Erasmus Roterodamus, which was probably printed in 1518.³⁰ The dialogue attacking a deceased in 1513 Pope Julius II, also nicknamed "The Fearsome Pope," presents a ridiculed and humiliated dignitary fruitlessly defending himself at the Gate of Haven, where he is turned away from (as is Claudius in *Apocolocyntosis*).³¹

A formal sign of recognition which binds the Old Polish Menippean satire with the ancient works is the *prosimetrum*, a comic view of the reality, applying both parody and allusion, which connect the works with the tradition and the contemporary literary life. The Old Polish Menippean satire is also up to date: it reacts to important political and social as well as customary events characteristic for the times.

However, the most important and innovative feature as regards the genre tradition is the utilitarian character of the Old Polish literary works: a moralist adopts parodical and ironic appearance and he tries to regulate the morals with the others in the spirit of playful polemics with renowned figures in parenetic literature. There is also one more important aspect which differentiates the Old Polish Menippean satire from the ancient models: old Polish writers not only present the fall of good manners and customs and criticize their contemporary moral corruption, but they also seek solutions to the problematic situation. Old Polish Menippean satire comprises more moralising lecturing, warning against the effects of the collapse of manners and appealing for the improvement than classical Menippean satires. This is certainly connected with the already mentioned domination of utilitarian purposes due to the then prevailing political situation, position of religion and manners.³²

³⁰ Remarks on the author of the dialogue *Julius exclusus e coelis*, see: M. Cytowska: "Od tłumacza [From the Translator]." In: Erasmus Roterodamus: *Rozmowy* [Conversations]. *Wybór* [Selection]. Trans. and ed. M. Cytowska. Warszawa 1969, pp. 11–13.

³¹ As regards reasons behind writing the dialogue attacking Julius II, see: J. Huizinga: *Erazm* [Erasmus]. Trans. M. Kurecka, introduction M. Cytowska. Warszawa 1964, pp. 113–123.

³² The dominance of utilitarian purposes is a characteristic feature of the old Polish prose as stressed by J. Rytel: *Studia z dziejów prozy staropolskiej* [Study of the History of the Old Polish Prose]. Warszawa 1990, pp. 26–49.