News from Uppsala

A recent dissertation titled Polsk poesi under mellankrigstiden: ett paradigmskifte. Exempel marialyriken (Polish Interwar Poetry: A Paradigm Shift. The Case of Marian Lyrics) has been publically defended by Marousia Ludwika Korolczyk. Details about the event, including an abstract, are given below.

The dissertation was publicly examined on December 10th, 2011, in Ihre Hall, Centre for the Humanities, Uppsala University. The defense was conducted in Swedish.

Abstract


The dissertation examines how medieval poetic tradition was reactivated in the production of poetry from the period between the two world wars—the Polish interwar period, defined here as one of literary transition. The positioning in regard to certain literary conventions and the quest for a new normativity that is so prevalent in interwar poetry is also reflected in the era’s poetry on the theme of Mary. Marian lyrics, owing to their strong position in Polish literature (but also by dint of their role in Polish piety and national identity), serve as an indicator in identifying and defining certain poetic processes. Central to this are the respective relationships of Marian themes to tradition and to the poetic norms of the era: is a given poem located along the traditional axis (if so, which), does it run counter to it, or is it an innovation?

The poems analysed—Julian Przyboś’ Heavenly Blue, Jerzy Liebert’s Litany to the Virgin Mary, Tytus Czyżewski’s De profundis, Maria Pawlikowska-Jasnorzewska’s The Black Portrait, Józef Czechowicz’ pious rhymes—represent disparate poetic models: the Krakow Avant-garde, Catholic literature, formism/futurism, the circle of Skamander, the Poetics of the Third Sphere in the Second Avant-garde. Reflected here is the broad spectrum of the period’s poetic trends, tendencies, and constellations—as are the historical and literary events of the era. Despite important differences in the poetic/aesthetic models, in these poems it is possible to identify shared characteristics relevant to this study, that is, elements of medieval poetry. The identifying criterion for these elements here is the concept of dogmatic formal language. In the poems
medieval poetics are transformed into their own modern form and integrated into the respective poetic models. No other literary epoch offers what the poets are seeking better than poetic formal language modelled on medieval liturgical language.

The five poets all participate in what has been called the *interwar paradigm shift in Polish poetry*—a parameter that only indirectly relates to modernism. The term *high modernism* (in the sense of the culmination of Polish poetic modernism) can serve to summarize the historical and literary delimitations and definitions in the study. As interwar poetry is indeed part of the definitive emergence and full expansion of modernism in Polish literature, serving as a link between tradition and innovation, such a study of the influence of high modernism and Marian lyrics on each other aspires to reflect general processes in the poetry of the time.

*Keywords:* Polish poetry, interwar period, paradigm shift, Polish high modernism, Marian lyrics, medieval aesthetic canon, dogmatic form, liturgical hymn

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