



Introduction

The study of reception started with Classical Reception, which was practiced as early as the Renaissance. Then the Classicism of the eighteenth century brought this Reception to the fore. The nineteenth century with its developing philology made Classical Reception one of the cornerstones of learning in the forms of Greek, Latin, and Ancient History. Classical Reception faded with the reforms of the twentieth-century higher education systems, only to be brought back to life by the foundation of the Classical Reception Studies. This type of Reception has been studied not only in Europe, but also in the United States,¹ Canada,² and in the Antipodes (see: Johnson, 2019).

The twentieth century extended the range of reception to the reception of various literatures, not exclusively those of the ancient world. Medievalism emerged as a form of reception of the medieval. Renaissance culture, in this issue exemplified by Shakespeare's plays, started to be analyzed from the perspective of how it was received by the audiences and readers contemporary to Shakespeare and those who lived later. The eighteenth century, itself fascinated with Classical Reception, became the subject of research on reception.

Marguerite Johnson refers to the Classical Reception as returns to "the Greek and Roman canon as well as the classically-inspired works of later writers" (Johnson, 2019: 2). T. A. Shippey defines medievalisms as "responses to the Middle Ages at all periods since a sense of the mediaeval began to develop" (Shippey, quoted in: Matthews, 2015: 1). How Shakespeare's plays are reworked is a recurrent theme in Shakespeare studies.³ The eighteenth and nineteenth-century literatures also keep returning in various forms.

¹ Neo-Classicism as the prevailing architectural tendency in the United States architecture remains the most recognizable aspect of the Classical Reception there; John M. Ganim writes that "Neoclassical urban planning . . . dominated rapidly growing cities, especially in North America, where it was claimed to encourage civic virtue" (Ganim, 2016: 37).

² For a discussion of Canadian neoclassical architecture see Maitland's study (Maitland, 1984).

³ For example, various special issues of the journal *Multicultural Shakespeare: Translation, Appropriation and Performance* discuss ways in which the plays are "translated" into the modern theatrical language, appropriated by various cultural perspectives, and performed in many countries (see, for example, Heijes and Thompson, 2020).

This monographic issue of the *Romanica Silesiana* journal not only treats reception as the aim of reception studies, but also addresses what Michael Alexander called “reproduction or reaction in any form” to earlier literatures and cultures.⁴ Furthermore, in the same email he commented that “everything is a recycling”, which extends the range of the authors’ investigations here to any forms of reworking and recycling of the earlier literary texts. This issue extends the meaning of reception beyond what in the 1970s was called *Rezeptionsästetik* by the Konstanz school, within which Wolfgang Iser and Hans Robert Jauss became the most famous literary scholars. The exact translation of the term is not “reader-response criticism”, as it functions in English, but rather “aesthetics of reception”, which Paul de Man, however, calls clumsy in his *Introduction* to Jauss’s essays (de Man, 1982). Wolfgang Iser famously established the field of “aesthetics of reception”. He recalled Roman Ingarden’s idea of concretization of a work of art (Iser, 1984: 183–186, 267–284). He diagnosed Ingarden’s concretization as something that relied on the classical concept of art, in which there are “correct” and “incorrect” concretizations.⁵ He extended Ingarden’s phenomenological perspective by questioning the idea that there exists one correct reception of a text and argued for the existence of many receptions, since the reader’s role is central in the process (Iser, 1973). Hans Robert Jauss contributed to the development of the “aesthetics of reception” by writing about, for example, Goethe’s *Iphigenia* as an instance of the manner in which classical culture was received in Romanticism (Jauss, 1973).

The term “reception” must be extended here to other scholarly approaches, since it is as difficult to grasp as much as “influence” or “posthumous fame” are difficult, according to Jauss (Jauss, 1982: 4). He writes about them as specific criteria that should otherwise be measurable, but they cannot. He quotes Karl Kosík, who claimed that a literary work lives only to the extent that it has influence (Kosík, 1967, quoted in: Jauss, 1982: 15). For Jauss a literary event is more important than just the category of “work”. “A literary event can continue to have an effect only if those who come after it still or once again respond to it”, as Jauss maintains (Jauss, 1982: 22). Reception is necessary for the literary work (or event) to exist in the history of literature or in literary theory. Without it the relationship between a text and its audience does not last, which means that the literary work dissolves into nothingness at least up till the time when it is going to be discovered again by some future audiences.

Here the contributors do not move within the strictly assigned area of the reader-response criticism, but they address the issues that were firstly discussed by this school of criticism. The issues are how lasting the influence of specific literary and cultural periods has been, whether the periods and the texts they pro-

⁴ This commentary by Michael Alexander and the next one come from the private email to Anna Czarnowus, sent on 30 October 2020.

⁵ For a commentary on Iser’s treatment of Ingarden’s theory see Mitosek’s study (Mitosek, 1983: 349).

duced can be interpreted beyond what Jauss called “the horizon of expectations” (Jauss, 1982: 22), and what fame texts achieve after the death of their authors.

The study of medievalism is getting internationally popular among scholars, as this journal issue shows in its predominance of such essays. Adrien Quéret-Podesta discusses Viktor Arnar Ingólfsson’s detective novel *The Flatey Enigma* as a modern Icelandic response to the lasting importance of medieval manuscript. The Old Icelandic manuscript here is *The Book of Flatey* and returning to the historical Middle Ages is presented by Ingólfsson as a gesture that has a didactic function. Furthermore, like all forms of medievalisms, this one comments on the present of the novel as well, which here are the relations between people. Andrzej Wicher’s essay “Some Boethian Themes in J.R.R. Tolkien’s *Lord of the Rings*” complements the previous critical perspectives on Tolkien as a medievalist (Chance, 2003). Wicher studies Tolkien’s medievalism in the form of his possible responses to Boethius. Wicher notices the crypto-Christian plot, similarities in the construction of characters, such as Galadriel, Frodo, and Tom Bombadil, and the importance of religious beliefs for Tolkien.

Carl Sell’s essay sees the novels and short stories of the *Dragonlance* setting as modern-day examples of Arthurian reception due to the presence of knights, honour, and codes of chivalry in them. Sturm Brightblade follows the code of honour in the medieval past, which is characteristic of Arthurian knights, and he has “Arthurian” qualities. Also some narrative arcs and the backstory are redolent of the King Arthur legend. The influence on the medieval on the modern is shown as valid in Dominika Ruszkiewicz’s essay. She interprets Joyce Carol Oates’s *Carthage* as a modern-day version of Chaucer’s *Troilus and Criseyde*. Both of the two narratives are about war, love, and loss. Oates responds to Chaucer’s poem in her choice of names and in the manner she develops the plot. The novel also uses political medievalism in that crusades are evoked in the discussion of the war on terror. Ruszkiewicz notices that both Chaucer’s narrative and Oates’s novel see rage as central for the characters’ experience of war.

The last two articles in this section of the journal issue discuss responses to the medieval and the Renaissance from the critical perspectives of, respectively, animal studies and disability studies. Anna Czarnowus’s essay on the *Intermedium* from the eighteenth-century *Graudenz Codex* examines the tradition of holding animals on trial as both a continuation of medieval animal trials and something that is a form of medievalism, since the trials are humorously reworked in the interlude in question. Animal trials were embedded in the folk anthropocentric approach to animals, but it appears that the eighteenth-century anonymous playwright already distances himself from this approach by means of the humour he uses. Anna Kowalce-Pawlik argues that the many contemporary stagings of Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* show not only how dis/ability shapes interpretations of the play, but also how the play’s reception changes due to the changing paradigms of thinking about dis/ability. Kowalce-Pawlik emphasizes that in performances of *The Tempest* Caliban’s stigmatization is often presented through his bodily difference.

The *Varia* section includes an essay by Paweł Matyaszewski, where he discusses Sylvain Maréchal's *Apologues modernes* (1789) as a type of the eighteenth-century prophesy of the revolutionary events to come. This essay does not treat of reception as such, but it clearly sees prophesy as an older manner of writing and this older manner returns at the end of the eighteenth century.


All of the essays above present reception as a current problem in literary studies. Literary epochs and cultural phenomena characteristic of them reverberate in the ensuing centuries. Texts only have to be read as not merely representing the times when they were written, but also something relevant for the future generations.

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