

Artur Jabłoński

Pomeranian Academy in Słupsk

Functions of Kashubian literature, its educational potential and the use of electronic media for its promotion

Contemporary researchers define Kashubian literature through the criterion of its language (Kalinowski 2014a). The Kashubs' first attempts at the creation of their literature date to the second half of the 16th century.¹ The alphabet, spelling, and linguistic grammar rules for the Kashubian language were developed by Florian Stanisław Ceynowa in the 1840s. For 170 years, Kashubian literature has been a tool used consciously and purposefully in the process of communication (Treder 2002: 102). The basic function of literature written in the Kashubian language since its very beginnings until today seems to be the preservation of the identity of the Kashubs, who – owing to their bond, originating from their cultural heritage – are a separate ethnic community (Drzeżdżon 2007). The ancient heritage preserved in the very language, customs, beliefs, and symbols, has been reflected in the works of native Kashubian writers.

The identity and myth-creating function

Kashubian literature, like other literary traditions, is to evoke joy, sadness, fear, desire etc. It is to entertain and educate, but above all, it is to help understand the world. It is to a significant degree identity-focused literature, referring to the self-awareness of its recipients. The Kashubian poetry, prose and drama have been introducing their readers to the world of values passed down from generation to generation since times immemorial.

This has been taking place both in the past and today in the face of the external and internal threats to one's own identity. The former apply above all to changes to one's traditional bonds with one's own place on Earth – the territory one lives in (Żelazny 2006) – while the internal threats result from individual choices determined by one's own needs (Żelazny 2006). The main danger for such minorities as the Kashubs is the process of conversion, understood as a more or less conscious change of one's own identity or a non-forced denationalization of the members of minority groups.

The Kashubs' literary narration forging their identity is based on the history, culture, and customs related to the Kashubian tradition. What is particularly significant for it is the symbolic and magical thinking typical for primitive cultures (Kulik-Kalinowska 2014). From the extensive canon of works by Kashubian authors, let us choose for instance *Rozmōwā Pòlôchā z Kaszëbq* [A Conversation between a Pole

¹ *Duchowne piesnie D. Marcina Luthera y jnyšich nabożnich męzow Zniemieckiego w Sławięsky ięzyk wilozone Przes Szymana Krofea, sluge słowa Bozego W Bytowie*, printed in 1586 in Gdansk, is believed to be the oldest historical example of Kashubian writing.

and a Kashub] issued in 1850 or *Rozmòwã Kaszëbë z Pòlòchã* [A Conversation between a Kashub and a Pole] from 1868 – both authored by Ceynowa. The first can be described as a “legendary-catechismal” dialogue “aimed at the promotion of the basic knowledge on Kashubs among Slavs” (Treder 2007: 21). The second is a voice introducing Kashubs “into the main stream of the 19th century socially engaged literature”, in which the author “severely criticizes the inequality of the estates, in particular the nobility and clergy” (Treder 2007: 44).

The identity function also marks Hieronim Jarosz Derdowski’s narrative poem *Ò panu Czorlińszcim, co do Pùcka pò sęcë jachôt* [About Mister Czorlinski Who Went to Puck for Fishing Nets] dating back to 1880, works by Towarzystwo Młodokaszubów (*Young Kashubs Society*) headed by Jan Karnowski, Leon Heyke and Aleksander Majkowski as well as the literary achievements of *Zrzeszińcy* – a poetic-ideological group operating during the interwar period, whose members included Aleksander Labuda, Jan Trepczyk, and Jan Rompski.

Must-reads created at that time include Aleksander Majkowski’s 1938 novel *Żëcé i przigodë Remusa* [Life and Adventures of Remus] (Majkowski 1938) and Jan Rompski’s play *Wzénik Arkónë* [The Resurrection of Arkona] completed in 1939 (Rompski 2009). Daniel Kalinowski writes about the first of these works that “in its multitude of threads and the presented system of values it grows from the Kashubian folk tradition”, but that “the second interpretative space in terms of importance” of Majkowski’s novel “are elements of the romantic worldview”, which can be sensed in particular “in the aura of the literary creation” of its main protagonist, who wants to mobilise Kashubs to fight for their own identity (Kuik-Kalinowska, Kalinowski 2009).

A similar understanding of writing marked Jan Rompski, who felt obliged to kindle a spark that would trigger his compatriots – immersed in historical oblivion and indifferent to the values flowing from their own culture – to act. For the author of *Wzénik Arkónë*, it was the national idea that was the saving power in the fight for a revival and continued existence of the Kashubian community. Rompski’s play takes place in Rugia, in the ancient Slav gord of Arkona, which has a symbolic meaning. The spirit of the place is to be resurrected in our own times, so that Pomeranians-Kashubs enter “The Road to the Reborn Arkona of Today” / “Na drogã do nowi dzys Arkónë” (Kuik-Kalinowska 2009: 48).

Both the above works are also excellent examples of the myth-creating function of literature. The motifs, figures, and images recognisable for Kashubian literature have been developed within it throughout all the years of its existence (Kalinowski 2014a). Basically, they are the source of its power and creation, since they create a rich structure of meanings.

Myths and identity narration are not unknown to the post-war authors either, as well as the authors writing today. Among the many names there are above all – Jan Zbrzyca, Jan Drzeżdżon, Stanisław Janke, Krystyna Muza, Ida Czaja, and Jaromira Labuda. It is worth taking a look at Drzeżdżon’s 1993 novel *Twôrz Smãtka* [Smãtk’s Face] (1993). In my opinion, the key to its interpretation is the essay *O etniczności* [On Ethnicity] that the author wrote a year before the publication of the novel, just a couple of weeks before his death (Drzeżdżon 2007). “We may say” – he wrote – “that the twentieth century brought about the death of the national ideologies, since peoples were

internally destroyed by imperialism. Therefore, their place will be taken by ethnic societies together with their mythologies, and they will probably turn out to be extremely proficient at culture-making" (Drzeżdżon 2007: 40). It is with this hope, embodied in the figure of a little boy, that Drzeżdżon concluded his last novel.

Also, Artur Jabłoński's novel *Namerkôny* [The Marked One] published in 2013 (Jablonski 2013) fits the literary tradition. Daniel Kalinowski argues that it is an attempt at enlivening myths to reach non-literary goals (Kalinowski 2014b), while Adela Kożyczkowska writes about this work in the following way:

Built and continuously rebuilt by Amandus [the main protagonist – A.J.], his identity is an interesting effect of an unsolvable and perpetual conflict between man and culture. On the one hand, people need culture to subjugate and control nature and to indicate different scopes and types of relationships within the community, while on the other – it has an oppressive effect on people, as it tries to immobilise them. Subjugate them. Politicise them. (Kożyczkowska 2013: 202).

Today, Kashubian literature reflects like a mirror the changing cultural awareness of the youngest generation of its creators and recipients. Literature tries to "domesticate" the global phenomena penetrating with great impetus the Kashubian cultural space. In poetry, it is most clearly noticeable in works by Hanna Makurat (2010, 2011), Gracjana Potrykus (Pòtrékùs 2012) and Mateusz Tytus Meyer (2013), in prose in the literary pieces by Grzegorz Schramke (2006) and Wojciech Myszk (Mëszk 2014), and in drama in the plays by Roman Drzeżdżon (2009) and Adam Hebel.² For a couple of years now we have also been able to talk about a return of the Kashubian magazine column, which was developing during the interwar period (Kalinowski 2014c). This genre is currently represented by Roman Drzeżdżon and Tomasz Fopke (Drzeżdżon, Fopke 2010).

Educational potential of Kashubian literature

The teaching of the Kashubian language in schools began in September 1991 (Mistarz 2014). The first Kashubian schools were established in Głodnica, in a commune of Linia (a primary school) and in Brusy (a general education upper secondary school). They were founded under the regulation of the Minister of Education of 1988 on the teaching of the mother tongue to children and youth of non-Polish nationalities, which in 1992 was amended by the regulation of the Minister of National Education on the organization of education facilitating the maintenance and development of the national, ethnic, and linguistic identity of students belonging to national minorities (Mistarz 2014). According to September 2014 data from the Educational Information System, the Kashubian language was taught to 18,000 students in 393 schools, including 291 primary schools (14,492 students), 112 lower secondary schools (2,766 students), and 27 upper secondary schools (742 students; *Zgłosz dziecko na język kaszubski* [Enroll your Child for Kashubian Classes] 2015).

² His play *Smãtkòwò spiéwa* was staged by the Zymk theatre twice: in Luzino on 18 March 2011, and in Gdynia on 22 June 2011. Adam Hebel is also the author of a scenario for the latest adaptation of Lech Bądkowski's play *Sąd nieostateczny* [The Non-Final Judgement] staged by the Neokaszubia theatre in the Kashubian Concert Hall in Wejherowo.

It should be remembered that in the 1970s as a result of repressive measures of the Polish state, the Kashubian language was not only eliminated from social communication, but its generational transfer was also severed. Since children speaking Kashubian at school experienced discrimination from a considerable share of teachers, the parents – guided by their concern – resigned from communication in this language at home. Towards the end of the 1980s only a dozen or so percent of young people could speak the Kashubian language (Mistarz 2014). This is the reason school education is so important for the revival of Kashubian, which started after the democratic transformations in Poland in 1989. It is to integrate the local community, bring up children and youth in the spirit of Kashubian patriotism, raise ethnic awareness, and, consequently, develop historical and cultural awareness (Grucza 2007).

At the initial stage of school teaching, Kashubs did not have their own textbooks and used teaching programmes developed by individual teachers themselves. In 1990, following the endeavours of *Zrzeszenie Kaszubsko-Pomorskie* [Kashubian-Pomeranian Association], a collection of excerpts from Kashubian literature gathered by Tadeusz Lipski was published – it was prepared with the teachers of the Polish language in mind (Lipski 1990). The literary texts offered in this collection constituted a review of the achievements of Kashubian writers until 1989. Two years after the publication of the book *Remusowi króm. Wypisy z literatury kaszubskiej dla nauczycieli języka polskiego* [Remusowi króm. (Remus's Shop) Excerpts from Kashubian Literature for Teachers of the Polish Language], there appeared the first textbook for teachers of Kashubian: *Kaszubski język literacki. Podręcznik dla lektoratów* [Kashubian Literary Language. A Textbook for Language Teaching]. The book was developed by Róża Wosiak-Śliwa and Marek Cybulski from the University of Gdansk and also contained fragments of classical texts from Kashubian literature (Wosiak-Śliwa, Cybulski 1992). For the purposes of teaching at school at Głodnica, the teacher employed there, being also a Kashubian poet – Jaromira Labuda – translated Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tale *The Ugly Duckling* into the Kashubian language (Andersen 1996).

However, there were no new literary texts by Kashubian authors, and in particular literary prose. Kashubian environments reacted to this shortage by organising the Jan Drzeżdżon National Prose Competition in 1995. The competition, organised until today, turned out to be a worthwhile initiative. In 1996, the publication house Szos, partly using the works entered for the competition, published an anthology of contemporary Kashubian prose *Dërchôj królewiónkò. Antologia dzysdniowi prozë kaszëbsczi* [Dërchôj królewiónkò (Live on, Princess). An Anthology of Today's Kashubian Prose], featuring texts by 28 authors. For 16 of them, the book was a debut (Pryczkowski 1996). The editor of the anthology, Eugeniusz Pryczkowski, wrote in the introduction:

The book is to respond to the needs of regionalists, actors, teachers and children, who deal with the development of the Kashubian word through recitation, writing, and the search for their own roots in the mother tongue, stories and legends. In particular, this book is to come to the assistance of the facilitators from "Rodnô Mòwa" [Mother Tongue] Kashubian Prose and Poetry Recitation Competition, the final of which is held every year in Chmielno (Pryczkowski 1996: 5–6).

It was as late as in 2001 that the world saw the first Kashubian textbook with exercises *Kaszëbë. Zemìa i lëdze. Podrëcznik do jëzyka kaszubskiego z ëwiczniami* [Kaszëbë. Zemìa i lëdze (Kashubia. Land and People). Kashubian Language Textbook with Exercises] written by Danuta Pioch, a teacher, for grade 1–3 children in mind (Pioch 2001). The publication of the book was followed by many subsequent textbooks and collections of excerpts from literature – obviously reflecting the possibilities and potential of Kashubian environments. At the moment, schoolchildren use their own Kashubian textbooks at every stage of education – from the first grade of primary school through lower secondary school all the way up to upper secondary school.³

Kashubian literature created for the purposes of the school or – to be more precise – the “school recipient” has become an almost separate phenomenon (Kalinowski 2014c). No longer sufficient are lists of readings or textbooks being a collection of excerpts from Kashubian literature. Teachers themselves have started to create literary texts. Examples include the publication *W krôjnie Grifa. Tëatrowé scenarniczi* [In Gryphon’s Land. Theatre Scenarios] – a collection of thirty Kashubian play scenarios, meant to be used by both teachers of the Kashubian language and regional theatre groups (Pryczkowska, Wejer, Formela 2012). In this collection, as Daniel Kalinowski pointed out:

one may sense care (...) which supports pupils and students on their way to further identity development. This is because the world of theatre, through its ability to evoke the mood of joy, fondness, and respect, as well as the atmosphere of sadness, aversion, or disapproval, supports the creation of one’s personal attitude to the external world. Drama techniques may also show in an attractive way identity-related and ethnographic testimonies to spiritual culture (Kalinowski 2014c: 127–128).

Another item with a similar nature and purpose is a collection of theatrical lesson scenarios *Ûsôdzczì na wdôr...* [Works in Memory of...] (Baska-Borzyszkowska 2013). Their author, Felicja Baska-Borzyszkowska, reached for the classics of Kashubian literature, using their texts to write her own collages of small theatrical forms. They too are to encourage young people to a different, more active participation in the world of Kashubian tradition.

Another example of the use of Kashubian literature in the process of the education of children and youth is the comic book. Piotr Dziekanowski, a publisher and journalist from Bytów, is the father of the idea, a facilitator and a strong advocate of the use of the potential of this form of literary message and it is owing to him that the town is becoming the Kashubian capital of the comic book. Recent years witnessed the publication of his three works: the historical comic book *Szczeniã Swiãców* [Puppy of the Swiencas] was published in 2009 (Kucharski, Natrzecy 2009), the photo comic book *Arbata* was printed in 2012 (Natrzecy, Rolbiecki 2012), and *Akademiô błotowëch żółwiów* [The Acade-

³ Textbooks for primary schools include: D. Pioch, *Kaszëbë. Zemìa i lëdze. Podrëcznik do jëzyka kaszubskiego z ëwiczniami* [Kaszëbë. Zemìa i lëdze. Kashubian Language Textbook with Exercises]; D. Pioch, *Zëcé codniowé na Kaszëbach*; D. Pioch, *Najô domôczna*; D. Pioch, *Z kaszëbsczim w swiat*; T. Czerwińska, A. Pająk, L. Sorn, *Z kaszëbsczim w szkôle*; J. Labùda, *Zôrno mûwë: podrëcznik do ùczbë jãzëka kaszëbszczégò dlô pòczãtkùjącëch*; J. Labùda, *Zdrój słowa* [The Spring of Words]. The textbook for the lower secondary school is D. Pioch, *Òjczëstô mûwa*, and one for the upper secondary school is F. Baska-Borzyszkowska, W. Myszk, *Kaszëbë. Jô w kaszëbsczì, kaszëbskô w swiece*, parts 1 and 2.

my of Pond Turtles] – a story of the adventures of two little turtles that demonstrate the power of friendship – was issued in 2015 (Kucharski, Nowotnik 2015).

The use of electronic media

Considering the limited circle of readers of Kashubian literature – which is related to the relatively recent introduction of the Kashubian language to the system of education, and so to a still considerably common phenomenon of a certain illiteracy among the adult users of the Kashubian language – the present-day channels of its dissemination: electronic media, audiobooks and e-books are important for Kashubian literature.

Among the first ones to turn attention to this fact were the creators of the Kashubian television programme *Rodnô Zemìa* [Fatherland] (Prëczkòwsczi 2003). It was as a part of this programme, broadcast for two years (2000–2002) by the Gdansk branch of the Polish TV, that with children's participation as a part of lessons of the Kashubian language thirty lyrics to songs were created; together with musical notation, they were published in the book *Piesnie Rodny Zemi* [Songs of the Fatherland] in 2003 (Fópka, Prëczkòwsczi, Stachùrszczi 2003).

Worthy of special attention is the *Kaszubskie Bajania* [Kashubian Storytelling] project that has lasted since 2011. It is a social campaign carried out jointly by the Kashubian-Pomeranian Association and Radio Gdansk. As the founders of the Akademia Bajki Kaszubskiej (Kashubian Fairy Tale Academy) write on its website: "The Academy was established with children in mind, so that they become familiar with the cultural heritage of Kashubia from their earliest years". Another goal of the campaign is to raise the public awareness of the role of reading to children (Akademia Bajki Kaszubskiej 2011). As many as four records have already been published under a joint title *Najpiękniejsze bajki i baśnie kaszubskie* [The Most Beautiful Kashubian Fairy Tales and Fables], and some well-known Kashubian artists, creators, researchers, journalists, self-government officials, and priests, including Danuta Stenka, Maciej Miecznikowski, Rudi Schubert, Krzysztof Skiba, professor Jerzy Treder, professor Józef Borzyszkowski, Fr. Marian Miotk and the runner Angelika Cichocka, have lent their voice to them.

As a part of the *Kashubian Storytelling*, meetings with children are held in kindergartens, children's homes, and hospitals. During these events, the guest speakers read fairy tales and talk about Kashubian customs and traditions. An important part of the social campaign is the Fairy Tale Family Festival with games, plays, competitions, and performances of children's groups (Akademia Bajki Kaszubskiej 2011). A book with a CD prepared by the Baltic Sea Cultural Centre in Gdansk is also worth mentioning. Texts for the collection *Ôpòwiédz mie bôjkã. Opowiedz mi bajkę* [Ôpòwiédz mie bôjkã. Tell me a Story] were selected by Dušan-Vladislav Paždjerski, a Slavist from the University of Gdansk (Paždjerski 2010).

A Kashubian literary protagonist has also become a character in a video game *Stark Remus* [Grandpa Remus]. The game was created in 2012 by the foundation *Aby Chciãto się Chciãć* co-financed by the Kartuzy district. During the game, the player helps grandpa Remus in his spring cleaning, learning the basic Kashubian nouns as they go along. The game already has its second, much extended version, and enjoys an unwavering interest of children, teachers, and parents (Akademia Bajki Kaszubskiej 2011).

In turn, as a part of a private initiative of Kaszubska Agencja Artystyczna established by Tomasz Fopke, two audiobooks with classics of Kashubian literature were released. In 2013, the audience were offered a CD with Hieronim Jarosz Derdowski's narrative poem *Ò panu Czorlińszim, co do Pùcka pò sęcë jachòł*. Two years earlier, Aleksander Majkowski's novel *Żęcë i przigodë Remusa*, read by Fopke, was published.

We still need to remember that it was not Fopke who faced the challenge of reading Majkowski's novel for the first time. At the beginning of the 1990s, actor Zbigniew Jankowski's pioneer reading of the entire text was recorded for the "Radiowy Magazyn Kaszubski" *Na bôtach ë w bòrach* [Aboard Boats and in Forests] prepared by Dominik Sowa and Leszek Szmidtke. The recording was subsequently issued on cassette tapes and for this reason today it is practically impossible to listen to it in home conditions. The same can be said about the tape *Gòdci ëi wice* [Tales and Jokes], released in 1991 by the *Tatczëzna* magazine, which contained literary stories told by Józef Roszman and Roman Skwiercz. Also, in the 1990s Radio Gdańsk adapted for its purposes Jan Drzeżdżon's short stories from the book *Zwònnik* [The Bell Ringer], which were interpreted by Artur Jabłoński, and *Winnie-the-Pooh* translated into Kashubian and interpreted by Bożena Szymańska-Ugowska. These recordings, having been broadcast on the radio, remain kept in the archives of Radio Gdańsk.

Established in 2004, Radio Kaszëbë, broadcast by Stowarzyszenie Ziemia Pucka, at some point aired both audiobooks prepared by Tomasz Fopke (*Ò panu Czorlińszim, co do Pùcka pò sęcë jachòł* and *Żęcë i przigodë Remusa*) as well as *Figle gnieżdżewszich gbùrów* [Jokes of Rich Farmers from Gnieżdżewo], authored by Jan Patok and interpreted by Fopke. This recording is available on the Soundcloud music and podcast streaming platform which is used by the radio (Patok 2014). It is also there that one may find an audio play based on Jablonski's novel *Namerkòny*, which Radio Kaszëbë aired as a series in 2014. The recording involved ten speakers, who often impersonated two or three characters (Jablonski 2014). For Radio Kaszëbë, fragments of the novel *Żòłti kam* [The Yellow Stone] were read by its author, Stanisław Janke. They are also available at Soundcloud (Janke 2014).

In the 170 years long history of Kashubian literature, its identity function appears purposefully, often as a part of a deliberate ideological project (Kalinowski 2014a). Writers try to answer the basic question of every human being coming into the world. The question concerning one's self, one's identity, has always posed a great challenge. Like in the past, Kashubian literature still wants to help people find their own place in the world. Present day technologies, including electronic media, are excellent tools of assistance in this task faced by literature. They are also helpful in the educational processes. Their appropriate use may strengthen the power of the message of literary texts, and, consequently, the power of the identity-related reflection of the Kashubs.

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Summary

Functions of Kashubian literature, its educational potential and the use of electronic media for its promotion

For over 170 years now, that is from its early beginnings, the primary function of the literature written in the Kashubian language has been preserving the own voice of the Kashubs who thanks to ties derived from the cultural heritage, constitute a distinct ethnic community. The themes, figures or images characteristic of the Kashubian literature as a source of its strength and creative power, form a rich structure of meanings responsible for the myth-making factor in its literary output. As in a mirror, the contemporary Kashubian literature reflects the changing cultural self-consciousness of the youngest generation of writers and readers. Literature is trying to “tame” the global phenomena, which force their way vehemently into the Kashubian cultural space.

Kashubian language and literature were included on a permanent basis in the educational system in the early 1990s. However, there was a lack of new literary texts of Kashubian authors, and especially ones written in prose. The reaction of the Kashubian circles was organizing a Jan Drzeżdżon National Prose Competition in 1995. It was not earlier than in 2001 that the first textbook with exercises was published. *Kaszëbë. Zemia and lëdze. Podręcznik do języka kaszubskiego z ćwiczeniami* was written by the teacher Danuta Pioch for the children from classes I–III of the primary school. Since then there has been a real boom for the next school textbooks and extracts from literature – of course one reflecting the scale of Kashubian circles and their potential. A separate phenomenon can be observed, namely Kashubian literature created for the needs of school curricula or rather for “the school audience”.

Because of the limited number of Kashubian literature readers, which results from the quite recent introduction of Kashubian to the educational system and fairly common illiteracy among adults, the most important for the Kashubian literature are modern channels of its distribution: electronic media, audio books and e-books. A Kashubian protagonist has also become a character from a computer game *Stark Remus*. Modern technology, including electronic media, are also helpful in educational processes. Their proper use can enhance the effectiveness of the message of a literary text, and thus the power of the identity consideration of the Kashubs.

Keywords

Kashubs, Kashubian literature, identity, education, electronic media

English translation: Anna Moroz-Darska

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