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Literary essay. Art or journalism?

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ABSTRACT

Although it is difficult to precisely define what an essay is, it seems obvious that it is older than the press itself. However, later on, as can be seen on the example of English, but not only Enlightenment periodicals, of the development was dependent on the existence of ambitious press. In the 19th and 20th centuries, the most interesting essays were published in various monthlies and weeklies. For example, the Parisian "Kultura" created favourable conditions for many émigré authors. Today's press is increasingly indifferent to essay writing resulting in essayists publishing in low circulation literary periodicals, which do not play much of a role on the media market.

As a result of the fact that in early 19th century the term "essay" is so freely used, it can mean anything from a school homework paper, a term paper to a political article. We need to emphasize that in this article we will be dealing with a "literary essay" which is considered to be a literary genre and a work of art¹. Additionally, we will be focusing on the role of the essayist who is not a random journalist working on an assignment. In this context, an essayist is a creator, more a prose writer than a journalist².

20th century literary essays were written by the most renowned European authors of the time such as Paul Valéry, Thomas Mann, Thomas Stearns Eliot, Albert Camus, Elias Canetti or Milan Kundera. In Poland they were: Czesław Miłosz, Zbigniew Herbert, Gustaw Herling-Grudziński, Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz... For all of the above, the essay was not just an occasional press article. Works such as *Ziemia Ulro* or *Barbarzyńca w ogrodzie* are just as important as *Światło dzienne* and *Hermes, pies i gwiazda*. Today, it is not possible to discuss history of literature with the omission of an essay which even 50 years ago was considered to be a marginal genre since for a long time what predominantly determined a writer's position were works such as poetry or prose in the form of novels or even plays.

¹ The most comprehensive attempt to gather knowledge on this subject was made by R. Sendyka, *Nowoczesny esej. Studium historycznej świadomości gatunku*, Kraków 2006.

² On the difference between an article and essay see: J.W. Krutch, *No Essays, Please!*, [in:] *Modern Essays*, ed. by R. Nye, Chicago 1963, p. 197–203.

The history of modern essay is older than that of European press. The first edition of *Essais* by Michel Montaigne was published in 1580. Later on, Francis Bacon's *Essays* were printed in 1597 while the complete works comprised of 58 essays published in 1625 showed that an essay book can change its form and be different in every edition (contrary to poems or novels). This phenomenon can be observed based on the prose of French 17th century moralists such as La Bruyère and La Rochefoucauld. Their works and activity can be compared to that of Montaigne and Bacon even though they used literary forms known since ancient times.

The thinkers of the day did not need or thrive on popularity. They also did not wish, like their 18th century counterparts, to shape people's moral sensitivity and aesthetic tastes or to bring about social change. At that time, the relationship between the press and essayists was existent because it made common sense.

In Great Britain, in the 18th century published was the famous "The Spectator" by Addison and Steele, preceded by the informative "The Tattler"³. In view of history of the essay as well as European Enlightenment, "The Spectator" was definitely more imperative with its intensity and high volume of works. It was calculated that within only three years the paper published an incredible number of about 6000 essays⁴. What is even more surprising is the fact that initially it was published six times a week, which makes it a literary daily! The above can make us change the stereotypical view of writing essays slowly, without rush and with putting much thought into what one says⁵. It can also make us ponder whether essays published by Addison and Steele, despite being artistic masterpieces, were not just instruments of ideological propaganda carried out with a lot of finesse and a good sense of humour. It should be noted, though, that we are dealing with a daily much different from today's popular dailies or even weeklies⁶.

Enlightenment essays have, without doubt, appeared in "Monitor" and "Zabawy Przyjemne i Pożyteczne", however, we are still waiting for an analysis of this form of writing

³ "The Tattler" came out three times a week between April 12, 1709 and January 2, 1711. It was originally R. Steele's project although J. Addison prepared about 40 issues as well.

⁴ "The Spectator" was a daily (came out six times a week) from March 1, 1711 and December 6, 1712. Since June 8, 1714, it came out three times a week until December 20, 1714. Its, "9th volume", published in 1715 by W. Bond is not considered its continuation by some.

⁵ On the relations between Montaigne and Bacon's essays and Addison and Steele's writing see: Z. Sinko, *Wstęp, [in:] Spectator. Wybór*, Wrocław 1957, p. XXXVIII–XLI.

⁶ What is called a *periodical essay*.

in 18th century Poland⁷. We could go even further back, to Old Polish authors who propagated their works before the onset of the press⁸.

In the latter part of the 19th century, noted was a great popularization of dailies and magazines around the country. With a growing number of readers and subscribers, developed such forms of writing as column articles, chronicles, correspondence, travel letters and reports. The term “essay” was used rather sporadically but it does not mean that it was inexistent.

Norwid’s *Czarne kwiaty* can be classified in the category of essay as no other genre could better describe this masterpiece. In it, the author uses post mortem poetics or what could be called elaborate obituary style, both rather popular 19th century journalist genres, however, both style and composition and characteristic to Norwid implicit statements show his innovative style⁹. Not many remember that *Czarne kwiaty* was first published not as a book but as a series in Cracow’s “Czas” magazine¹⁰. It could be surprising since, even then in the 19th century, editors preferred their papers to be run on a routine basis. Literary experiments were considered rather risky.

Further expansion of journalism after the fall of the January Uprising resulted in the development of typically journalistic genres, particularly that of the feature article. The only genre which could successfully compete with it toward the end of the century was a novel in installments. Poetry was gradually being driven out by more topical information, illustrations, polemics, reports and articles on current socio-political issues.

Almost all renowned Polish writers from the late 19th century were somehow involved with the press. It does not mean they all wrote essays, although it all depends on the definition of essay one wishes to apply. It seems obvious that at least three authors should be taken into consideration regarding academic research on the evolution of Polish 19th century essay. All three of them are pillars of Polish press, even though at the time they might not have paid any attention to the definition of essay or the genealogical issues related. Without doubt, it is easy to point out the works which can be considered essays.

⁷ The term “essay” regarding texts published in the “Monitor” is used by, for example, Z. Sinko, „*Monitor*” wobec angielskiego „*Spectatora*”, Wrocław 1956, p. 168–173.

⁸ A classic example is Stanisław Herakliusz Lubomirski, the author of the 17th century *Rozmowy Artaksesa i Ewandra*. See: M. Korolko, *Stanisław Herakliusz Lubomirski jako eseista*, [in:] *Stanisław Herakliusz Lubomirski. Pisarz, polityk, mecenas*, ed. W. Roszkowska, Wrocław 1982; B. Chodźko, *Czy to już esej? Analiza metody kształtowania materiału refleksyjnego w „Rozmowach Artaksesa i Ewandra”*, “Zeszyty Naukowe”. Uniwersytet Warszawski. Filia w Białymstoku. Humanistyka Dział FP – Filologia Polska Vol. 8 (1984), p. 5–34.

⁹ See: G. Halkiewicz-Sojak, *Żywiol eseistyczny w prozie Norwida*, “*Studia Norwidiana*” Vol. 12/13 (1994/1995).

¹⁰ C. Norwid, *Czarne kwiaty*, “Czas”. Dodatek Miesięczny Vol. 4 (1856), z. 12. The following year “Czas” published *Białe kwiaty* [“Czas”. Dodatek Miesięczny Vol. 5 (1857), z. 14].

Leading Polish positivism representative Aleksander Świętochowski's works consist of novels and dramatic plays but most of all of journalistic forms such as articles, the *Liberum veto* column, commentaries, manifests such as *My i wy*, academic papers and treatises. Świętochowski, an editor at "Przegląd Tygodniowy" and later "Prawda" was very impressive in his diversity of interests and writing styles. It is no wonder that in 1876 his *Dumania pesymisty* was first published in the press and a year later came out as a brochure¹¹. It is a puzzling and provoking text as it seems to question the majority of his own earlier positivist theories. In this case, characteristic to young people enthusiasm is replaced by skepticism. Agnosticism is not conducive to action and activism is paralysed by melancholy and resignation. This was Świętochowski's opinion and not that of the whole generation. It was an attempt to understand the secrets of one's soul, the hidden away "I" voice but it was also a work without conclusion. An essay attempt? Definitely so.

Similarly to Świętochowski, Prus was predominantly a novelist and a column writer. This is not to say that this most renowned Polish columnist of the 19th century, Positivism or even of all time writer was a columnist or an essayist. His *Kroniki* today are published in parts, however, if we read the entire 20 volume edition¹², it allows us to formulate some indisputable conclusions. Let us focus on three.

Firstly, today it would be highly unlikely that any daily or magazine would publish his *Kroniki* as a weekly column. These texts are written without rush, with in-depth reflection, focus on sources, statistical data, quotations and references to literature. Especially, his last *Kroniki* are entirely too serious to be feature articles which are generally light and not too serious. Prus talks about philosophy, sociology, metaphysics, economy, and politics which makes him more of an essayist than a column writer he considers himself to be.

Secondly, after reading *Kroniki* we can come to another imperative, although not considered by many, conclusion. It seems that 19th century formula of a feature column – long, ambitious, open and diversified in terms of theme, style, language, etc. – made it just like that of an essay, making a distinction between them unnecessary. The then popular structure of a column article was free enough that it also included essay structure which was in no way limited by editorial offices. What was more valued was a "light" writing style, humour and the writer's famous name.

¹¹ A. Świętochowski, *Dumania pesymisty*, Lublana 1877. Next edition: *Dumania pesymisty*, Warszawa 2002.

¹² B. Prus, *Kroniki*, by Z. Szwejkowski, Vol. 1–20. Warszawa 1953–1970.

Thirdly, not developed yet then was the profession of a column journalist as we know it today. Practically all late 19th century columnists were writers. They made extra money this way, often hating this ‘additional’ job as it made them look like ‘Sunday poets’. They would prefer to write poems instead of selling themselves to press editors who were more keen on topical articles, satire, illustrations and rebuses. Novelists were in a somewhat better situation as they could hope that they would achieve success on the book market and, hence, would not have to write for the press.

Inevitably, existent among poets of the time was a conflict between spiritual needs and everyday reality. Writers such as Miron, Zagórski, Stebelski and many others definitely experienced it. There were only a few who could combine both with success and relative peace of mind. One of them was Wiktor Gomułicki, the author of over 50 books – including poems, historical and modern novels, studies, sketches and pictures. Additionally, he also cooperated with almost all significant dailies and magazines on the market such as “Kurier Warszawski”, „Kurier Codzienny”, “Goniec Poranny”, “Tygodniki Ilustrowany”, “Kraj”, “Tygodnik Powszechny”, “Wędrowiec”, and even satire ones such as “Kolce” and “Mucha”. Without doubt, he loved writing for the press; that was his passion. Consequently, all his works which include texts published earlier for the press are of essay character. Journalism Gomułicki’s style is basically all about essay writing.

The author achieved his position and success as a result of hard work, experience and literary talent. He was priceless to editors also because he liked anecdotes, trivia and plays on language. Even about serious topics he could write freely, with ease and always in the first person but without too much personal involvement. What is more, happy with Gomułicki should be all those to whom an essay is not just a literary genre but an attitude to life and art. The precursors of this genre were, of course, Montaigne and Bacon. Even though neither of the two were Gomułicki’s idols, what we can find in his essays is respect for tradition, erudition, passion for bibliophily and caution regarding formulating final conclusions or extreme views. He paid much attention to style and words which could be compared to finely shaped “precious stones”¹³.

When at the start of the new century, in 1901, Zenon Przesmycki published the first editions of “Chimera”, Gomułicki welcomed the new periodical with an approving letter¹⁴. He himself never wrote for “Chimera”, publishing in more modest periodicals. Both, Przesmycki

¹³ W. Gomułicki, *Warszawa wczorajsza*, ed. by J.W. Gomułicki, Warszawa 1961, p. 261.

¹⁴ W. Gomułicki’s letter to Z. Przesmycki, March 4, 1901, “Poezja” 1984, No. 6/7.

and Gomulicki were avid bibliophiles and outstanding erudites. Additionally, it can be said that they can both be given credit for rediscovering and bringing to the people the literary legacy of Norwid. Even though they were from two different worlds, they had much in common. According to Miriam's programme, literature was to become an art form once again. A rejection of any kind of utilitarianism was a challenge for a positivist magazine where next to academic and socio-political articles there were also book reviews and literary works.

Even though "Chimera" is today considered to be the pride of Polish press, it is uncertain whether this secession era almanac should be classified as part of press history or art history. Although "Chimera" was a periodical, it definitely differed from other 19th century magazines such as "Przegląd Tygodniowy", "Tygodnik Ilustrowany", interwar period "Wiadomości Literackie", or post war Parisian "Kultura". What was the basic difference, aside from graphics, volume, print paper, editing style and historical conditions, between them? Miriam illustrated it well himself, building "Chimera" to be not just a literary periodical or an artistic almanac but a true work of art. This was in tune with secession era theoretical ideals; to pull man out of ugly, ordinary reality and take him into the garden of art. Beautiful then were to be not just paintings or china but also chairs, combs, locomotives, advertisements and visiting cards, not to mention books, magazines and posters¹⁵.

It is not surprising that "Chimera" was more likely to publish essays on art than other materials on more topical or even ordinary issues. Generally, it did not deal with politics, just as it did not take part in terminology disputes which, as is known, its chief editor did not like.

Just like many other essayists, Miriam was also not in the habit of using the term "essay". Considering the fact that he rejected other useful terms such as "modernism", "secession", or "decadence", it is not surprising that he did not give any thought to a literary genre such as an essay¹⁶. In general, there was a lot of terminological confusion regarding genealogy of this term. For example, 19th and 20th century biographical/critical sketches by Ernst Ziel and Paul Bourget were also named "essais"¹⁷. Looking back today, there is no better description than essay for the works which Przesmycki published in "Chimera" such as *Harmonia i dysonanse* and many others. Although Miriam liked to think of them as column articles, they would definitely be the longest in the history of Polish press feature articles.

¹⁵ See: [Z. Przesmycki] Miriam, *Nowe polskie ekslibrisy artystyczne*, "Chimera" Vol. 9 (1905).

¹⁶ See: Miriam, Tredecim, „*Modernizm*”, "Chimera" Vol. 7 (1904).

¹⁷ J. Żagiel, *Harmonie i dysonanse*, "Świat" 1891, No. 1–15.

In the Młoda Polska (Young Poland) era, essayists were thought to be erudites, aesthetes and beauty connoisseurs. Literature then was very close to other creative arts such as painting, philosophy and theatre. Stanisław Przybyszewski, Tadeusz Miciński, Wacław Berent and Stanisław Brzozowski can all be considered essayists even though they all wrote differently. Essays by Przybyszewski and Miciński were more like literary diaries than column articles or reports. Brzozowski's works, on the other hand, were much more journalistic in style. Despite cooperating with magazines such as "Głos", "Naprzód" and "Przegląd Społeczny", he still felt most comfortable writing books and brochures. Berent, the author of imperative to Polish literature *Opowieści biograficzne* essay series, would probably not feel satisfied with only working for a magazine. Even though he wrote slowly and with difficulty which editors do not like, Berent cooperated first with "Chimera" and later with "Miesięcznik Literacki i Artystyczny", "Nowy Przegląd Literatury i Sztuki" and "Pamiętnik Warszawski". One of the best essayists of the time was Marian Zdziechowski, a renowned academic writer. For him as well, a periodical was not enough to express himself. At times, he needed a couple volumes to fully express his thoughts¹⁸.

Despite the fact that the majority of periodicals of the time printed essays frequently, up until the outbreak of World War II and during the interwar period, not one periodical specialized in essays. This was partly due to a triumph of 20th century journalism, preferring current information and topical commentary. In high circulation press, the essay as a rather elitist genre was not all that popular. In literary press, on the other hand, it was in the shadow of poetry, prose and even literary reviews. Literary periodicals from the interwar period such as "Skamander", "Linia", "Zwrotnica" and "Żagary" were almanacs largely dominated by poets. "Wiadomości Literackie" did not say 'no' to essays but the weekly, engrossed in controversial issues of the day, known for open press polemics and with narrow layout space, limited the invasion of essays. Column articles, reviews and general articles were much more popular and, hence, welcome by its chief editor Grydzewski as they ensured him high readership.

Examples of interwar period ambitious essays are Adam Skwarczyński's "Droga", Jerzy Braun's "Zet" and Stanisław Piasecki's "Prosto z Mostu". Many valuable texts were published by "Verbum" quarterly, which mostly printed translated texts and presented modern

¹⁸ See: M. Zdziechowski, *Byron i jego wiek*, Vol. 1–2, Kraków 1894–1897; and, *Szkice literackie*, Vol. 1, Warszawa 1900.

Catholic school of thought. “Pion” is also worth mentioning as many notable humanists, such as Waclaw Borowy or Karol Irzykowski, wrote essays for it.

All in all, it can be said that none of the most famous essayists from the interwar period worked solely for one periodical where they could focus on establishing some sort of dialogue with readers. If any magazine gained, for example, Jerzy Stempowski, his creativity would have been, no doubt, much more ample. Meanwhile, the writer’s contacts with the press were irregular and without any significant consequences¹⁹. Another writer, Boleslaw Miciński, the author of *Podróż do piekiel*²⁰ also looked for a place for himself in the press. Tadeusz Boy-Żeleński is an exception, if we are prepared to consider his *Brzownicy*²¹ or *Marysieńka Sobieska*²² essays and not something entirely different, a genre somewhere in between a biographical work and a column article.

During the interwar period, debuted such writers as Jerzy Stempowski, Czesław Miłosz, Gustaw Herling-Grudziński and Józef Wittlin. Interestingly, aside from Stempowski who himself did not write a lot, none of the above were initially interested in essay writing. They first tried other genres, dabbled in poetry, prose and reviews. Meanwhile, after the war it was these four writers (plus a few others such as Andrzej Bobkowski and Stanisław Mackiewicz) who largely shaped the growing position of essay as a genre.

It was one man’s courage and determination which had the largest influence on the history of Polish 20th century essay. That man was Jerzy Giedroyc, the creator of Parisian “Kultura”, who himself was not an essayist or a professional writer. He published probably the most important post-war literary essay volumes such as *Orfeusz w piekle XX wieku*, *Eseje dla Kasandry*, *Od Berdyczowa do Rzymu*, *Rodzinną Europą* and *Ziemia Ulro*. He gave birth to, patroned and preserved the most renowned essay series such as Stempowski’s *Notatnik niespiesznego przechodnia*, Gombrowicz’s *Dziennik* and Herling’s *Dziennik pisany nocą*. It is doubtful whether without Giedroyc’s guidance and encouragement these works would have been created at all.

The essay became a particularly fitting form of developing one’s thoughts in a monthly which presented more in-depth analyses and assessments than regular dailies and

¹⁹ *Pielgrzym* was published in “Droga” (1923, No. 9; 1924, No. 1–2), *Chimera jako zwierzę pociągowe* w „Przeglądzie Współczesnym” (1933, No. 132), and *Literatura w okresie wielkiej przebudowy* – in “Kurier Wileński” (1935, No. 68, 75, 82, 89, 96, 103).

²⁰ For more on the shaping of consciousness for this genre in Poland see: R. Sedyka, *Nowoczesny esej...*, p. 139–142.

²¹ T. Żeleński (Boy), *Brzownicy*, “Wiadomości Literackie” 1929, No. 21, book edition: Warszawa 1930.

²² T. Żeleński, *Marysieńka Sobieska*, “Wiadomości Literackie” 1936, No. 24 – 1937, No. 28 [in intervals], book edition: Lwów 1937.

weeklies. With time, essay writing began to be more popular than column and review writing. Stempowski, with Giedroyc's approval, called this type of unhurried form of writing the pride of Parisian "Kultura"²³.

In the 1950s, it was hard to imagine the upcoming staggering essay careers by Albert Camus, Simone Weil or Elias Canetti. Emigration conditions were favourable to the essay form. "Kultura" would probably not be as successful if it was a typical poetic and literary almanac since there were not that many outstanding and systematically writing émigré writers²⁴ and texts from Poland came sporadically.

For Western readers, the periodical was interesting as it promoted particular political concepts; it dealt with modern world issues and specifically focused on the Soviet sphere of influence²⁵. In such case, the essay was the best and most effective form of writing. It combined autobiography (imperative to Eastern borderland exiles), political reflection, travel diaries and erudite sketches. The essay's open form allowed both artistic individualism (Gombrowicz) and more objective forms of expression (Stempowski, Herling).

"Zeszyty Literackie" was established in order to broaden essay creativity. In it, poetry, prose and literary criticism were more widely represented than in "Kultura", however, the essay was still dominant. This was mostly as a result of its editorial staff and contributors²⁶. Even though Zbigniew Herbert, Czesław Miłosz, Wojciech Karpiński, Ewa Bieńkowska and Adam Zagajewski represented different generations, they created the periodical's unique profile; more European and addressed to intellectuals rather than the political opposition. Thanks to the cooperation of Josif Brodski and Tomas Venclova, the periodical had international character.

In Poland, for a long time there was no periodical comparable to the Parisian "Kultura" and the essay as a genre was generally treated rather skeptically. Among Stempowski's three most outstanding students, one (Bolesław Miciński) died abroad, another (Zygmunt Kałużyński) was critical of the essay and only Jan Kott, the author of *Szkoła klasyków*, was loyal to the genre.

²³ He admitted that he gave him the idea for it, J. Giedroyc, *Autobiografia na cztery ręce*, afterward by K. Pomian, Warszawa 1994, p. 212.

²⁴ Prose writers (Witold Gombrowicz and Maria Kuncewiczowa) became the source of editorial conflict and the reason for decreasing subscriptions. See: J. Giedroyc, *Autobiografia...*, p. 163–164.

²⁵ See: *O „Kulturze”. Wspomnienia i opinie*, by G. and K. Pomian, London 1987, p. 155–158, 171–172 [statements by G. Rhode and J. Garliński].

²⁶ The periodical could be considered "a forum of expression for new émigrés". See: R. Habielski, *Polityczna historia mediów w Polsce w XX wieku*, Warszawa 2009, p. 366.

The essay was not a very welcome genre in the era of socialism as the system preferred writing which was more clear-cut, half-hearted and persuasive in character. There were exceptions, however, for example Jan Parandowski's *Alchemia słowa* published in 1951 or *Petrarka*, a biographical essay first printed in "Twórczość"²⁷.

It seems that after 1956 most attention was devoted to poetry, while a few years later – to prose and literary criticism. There were numerous weeklies on the market (there were complaints, however, that there was no typical literary weekly similar to Grydzewski's "Wiadomości Literackie") but their editors preferred column articles and reviews. In the following decade, there was more interest in non-fiction literature such as diaries, journals, reports and historical essays as they became one of the most popular forms of dealing with censorship.

Predominantly, essayists wrote for monthlies, although "Literatura" and "Tygodnik Powszechny" also printed numerous imperative essay publications. In the 1970s, the periodical "Twórczość" was at its best but also "Odra" and the Catholic "Więź" and "Znak" printed many lengthier texts. Standard units of text length were not very welcome by editors of socio-cultural weeklies but monthlies published texts several times that length. In "Twórczość" published essayists such as Zbigniew Herbert and Wojciech Karpiński, while in „Znak” – Ewa Bieńkowska. It can be said that there were no significant differences between essays written domestically and those abroad. The genre went through more or less the same processes as poetry, prose and journalistic articles.

Essayists also published in samizdat magazines, up until 1980, such as in "Zapis" and "Puls" and later in "Wezwania", "Arka" and "Kultura Niezależna". This included European authors who were not welcome by censorship such as Mandelsztam, Brodski and Kundera. However, for obvious reasons in most periodicals priority was given to articles on topical matters.

Essayists who could not publish in "official" literary press quickly found other means for their expression. The 1980s were the glory days of Catholic press. Not only "Tygodnik Powszechny", "Więź" and "Znak" but also other periodicals published essays and literature. Interesting essays were printed in "W drodze", "Przegląd Powszechny", "Powściągliwość i Praca" and "Przegląd Katolicki".

In Cracow, established was „Pismo” which devoted as much space to essays as "Twórczość". Regarding translations, there was no better periodical than "Literatura na

²⁷ J. Parandowski, *Petrarka*, "Twórczość" 1954, No. 12; 1955, No.1, 5, 6.

Świecie” which greatly valued essay writing, especially by Borges or Canetti and texts on American post-modernism which were very popular among readers.

Who knows, maybe in fifty years the 1970s and 1980s will be considered a dark period in political history characterized by great intellectual engagement. From the point of view of Polish literary press and essay history, the last 20 years is a rather unproductive period in comparison to the previous, even though the number of published texts would indicate otherwise.

Presently, modern press is big enough in volume that printing an average length essay is not a problem. However, this genre put next to crime or gossip columns, stock exchange information and political commentary does not stand a chance to gain mass recipients. Popular weekly format excludes the essay in its classical form; these days, a high circulation magazine’s position is determined by material prepared by the entire team of staff and is far from essayist search for answers.

What is left are ephemeral monthlies and quarterlies of various quality, targeted at specific circles and age groups, read by a narrow groups of recipients. This is a rather pessimistic conclusion. Even if it can be said that the essay driven out of periodicals is revived in book form, we still have little reason to be optimistic. Perhaps it is returning to its roots, to the times of Montaigne and Bacon but it is followed by a narrow group of enthusiasts.