

Tangled Objects

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More or less at the same time, towards the end of the 1950s, European and American artists began to use the device of repetition on a scale previously unmatched. Creators of Pop Art used techniques of multiplication and reproduction of industrial and pop culture images; the Situationists challenged audiences to grasp the vast array of phenomena in which the new economy of the spectacle was revealed; the art of critical appropriations made an effort to redirect its symbolic capital in the direction of constructive social change. The forerunners of such ideas are to be found in the Dada and Surrealist movements –*ready mades* or “found objects,” for example, constitute a point of departure for those later enterprises. The heightened popularity of devices based on repetition (recycling, appropriation, expropriation, borrowings) no doubt resulted from technological and economic changes. They in turn accelerated artistic decisions to reckon with the idea of the “purity of the medium,” established by American critics as the norm for modernist art. It can thus be said that it was then, at the end of the 1950s, that artists once again discovered their ability to participate in the “brutal manipulation of one’s sources,”¹ and maintained that participation in various forms.

Where Situationism and artists involved in the art of institutional critique maintained that repetition and appropriation were critical gestures, directed towards a change in the apparatus of power (both in art institutions and institutions of the state) and aiming toward the disintegration of the spectacle, the makers of Pop Art, as is well known, made light of the possible meanings of such strategies. The trouble with the ideologico-political purpose of art objects that made devices of repetition their *modus operandi* reached its height when it became necessary to ponder what the artists of the post-conceptualist, post-minimalist and post-expressionist currents of the 1980s and 1990s finally had to say. The best example of such

¹ Though naturally the beginnings of such thinking need to be looked for earlier; from this perspective McKenzie Wark writes about Gustave Courbet as a Situationist *avant la lettre*, quoting T. J. Clark: “Instead of pastiche, confidence in dealing with the past: seizing the essentials ... discarding the details, combining very different styles within a single image, knowing what to imitate, what to paraphrase, what to invent.” McKenzie Wark, *The Spectacle of Disintegration: Situationist Passages out of the Twentieth Century*, London 2013, e-book.

trouble – interpretative, or perhaps something more – is the work of Jeff Koons: considered by some (such as John C. Welchman) to be an ironist, by others (such as Hal Foster) – a cynic.² We face a similar situation – to refer to a completely different artistic conception – with the work of Ewa Hesse and her gesture of repeating minimalist strategies and referencing *action painting*. Arthur C. Danto finds that Hesse does not so much repeat as pretend to be repeating. In his opinion, she is distanced both from what she is repeating and from the strategy of repetition itself.³ The post-expressionism of such painters as Anselm Kiefer leads us toward questions about whether his apocalyptic images reinforce nostalgia for the greatness of Germany or rather show the consequences of “dreams of power”; the post-conceptualism of the Australian photographer Jeff Wall, incorporating his light-boxes into the work of his surfaces, though it resonates well with stories about our post-truth world, continues to arouse anxiety among those who are attempting to designate a border between truth and its excess or absence; finally, the post-conceptual political objects of Damien Hirsch indicate his ambivalence about the benefits of art becoming involved in politics. These are just some selected examples from the world of art which – by using such techniques as appropriation – complicate their own status and attempt to set up new relations with their surroundings, contexts or environments. We can find an endless number of such examples – particularly in post-medial art. In a time of the “surplus” of artistic production, artists prefer to come up with new uses for already existing objects than to create new ones. That is why reflection on the approach to objects constructed along axes of repetition and interception⁴ appear to me singularly intriguing and necessary.

Whenever repetition (device, strategy, design) enters into play, we face the problem of its meaning and the meaning of the effect it elicits. Art using repetition entangles us in processes of multiple mediations that cause the object’s deceptive ambivalence (a result of the operations of aesthetic illusion) to intensify still more and give the impression that in order to materialize that ambivalence in the form of an interpretative repetition, we should apply a close reading to the work. But at the same time, nothing makes us so conscious of the trap of aesthetic idealism than objects created within the framework of such a strategy – negating themselves as completed and closed works. Strategies of interception, appropriation and multiplication convince us that no artistic value exists in itself, cut off from its context or point of origin. That is why it seems to me that precisely such objects force us in a particular way to examine interpretative practices – they do not yield to any interpretation that confines them within a framework of thought about the isolated (self-sufficient) autonomy of the object, or that shifts the centre of gravity to processes, treating context and relationality as more important than “readymade” objects and their internal systems. Furthermore, what is at stake, with interpretative repetition, is defining the scale of art’s failure to recognize its enemies.

² See J. C. Welchmann, “Introduction. Global Nets: Appropriation and Postmodernity,” in *Art after Appropriation. Essays on Art in the 1990s*, San Diego 2001, p. 39. See also, *Postappropriation in the Work of Cody Hyun Choi 1998*, San Diego 2001, pp. 245–262.

³ See A. C. Danto, “The Art World Revisited: Comedies of Similarity,” in *Beyond the Brillo Box. The Visual Arts in Post-Historical Perspective*, Berkeley-Los Angeles-London, 1992, pp. 43–44.

⁴ The career of the category of appropriation (or interception) testifies to this. See e.g. *Appropriation*, ed. D. Evans, London-Cambridge, 2009; James O. Young, *Cultural Appropriation and the Arts*, Malden 2010; N. Bourriaud, *Postproduction. Culture as Screenplay: how Art Reprograms The World*, trans. J. Herman, New York 2002. An equivalent to this concept in literature would be, for example, Kenneth Goldsmith’s conceptual writing.

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Repetition (or interception) has not often loomed close within the sights of Polish poets. These poets – even those of the (neo)avant-garde – have most often used the strategy of interception to heighten the realistic or critical mode in a poem, if at all. Białoszewski repeats what he has heard (what he calls “nasłuchy,” or monitoring), but in such a way that it does not disarrange the mimetic possibility of establishing a “running” recording; poems of the new wave repeat political slogans and propaganda proclamations, taking care to ensure that there are no doubts as to how to understand these interventions into official political discourse. When Czesław Miłosz introduces Lithuanian language and images of everyday life from the times of prewar Vilnius (and elsewhere) in *Miasto bez imienia* (City Without a Name), they are supposed to testify in favour of documentary historical truth (to put any possible doubts to rest, the poem’s eloquence is further reinforced by footnotes). Witold Wirpsza, in his “Komentarze do fotografii ‘The Family of man’” (Comments on the Photographic Series *The Family of Man*) intercepts the captions under the photographs in Edward Steichen’s exhibit, but both the copies of photographs, and the captions under them, duplicate an autonomous sphere rather than a sphere of exchange. They function as quotations rather than interceptions, because the roles and positions of the texts appropriated are not changed, or are changed only insignificantly, in terms of their place on the cultural continuum. Their original context, in becoming a historical counterpoint for the poet’s opinions, is undoubtedly placed as a kind of negative background. And that indubitability of the relations between the copies of photographs and the poetic texts makes “Komentarzy do fotografii ‘Family of man’” only a counter-response built on the same principles according to which Edward Steichen designed his exhibit *The Family of Man* in 1955.

We will not find many examples of interception before the year 1989 – of course, repetition is useful to poems: it endows them with plasticity, increases their rhythmicity and even musicality, but when it originates in the public or political sphere it is treated as a foreign entity. That can be explained by the fact that in the Polish tradition the unique, private, idiomatic voice of the poet enjoyed a particularly long period of privilege. The thought that the most valuable poetry is that which discovers an original code for itself, reshaping the Polish language, led to poetic works being interpreted most avidly within one conception, invested in the aesthetic and ideological autonomy of the poem and depriving it of any context besides that of literary history. Reading practices used with poetry particularly privilege individual texts, and to the extent that systems in which poems interact with other poems are perceived, the most convenient metaphor used to conceptualize that system is usually the family: with a central poem, the masterly model, placed in the past and formalizing the other expressions, images and micro-narrations, which in this interpretation are dependent on that patriarch.

Poets have for some time been using a strategy of interception that makes it possible to go outside the poem understood as the property of a subject oriented toward underscoring his own individuality. It also gives them a chance to treat dependence on the forefather-poem as irrelevant, but at the same time sets up a set of other relations that determine the field of possibilities, from which there emerges something that we call a “significative utterance.” If we consider precisely the kind of poetic solution that turns the strategy of interception into an essential gesture, we will soon convince ourselves that such poetry can become something like contextual art. Some good examples of such art might be several poems of Bohdan Zadura. More or less “cribbing”

inscriptions from walls or transcribing television media reports, Zadura often limits himself to simply finding different environments for them than buildings and squares on the street.⁵ The books of Jaś Kapela (*Reklama* [Advertisement] and *Życie na gorąco* [Life Forthwith]) were also based on Pop Art interceptions. There is no doubt, however, that the poet who had had the most to say in connection with the strategy of interception so far is Darek Foks. Each of his books based on this device (*Co robi łączniczka?* [What Does a Liaison Do?], *Kebab Meister*, *Rozmowy z głuchym psem*, *Historia kina polskiego* [History of Polish Cinema]) sets up its own rules. Most often, however, it is shots from a film that fall prey to Foks's artistic operations. The serial nature of many of the forms he uses makes it impossible to focus on individual lines – in order to understand them, the analysis must be concentrated on the book as a unified object, not on individual forms. Individual forms analyzed separately have nothing to tell us. It should also be remembered that Foks's utterance emerges from a polygamy of devices, so to speak the interception works together with what we might call, inspired by Jeff Wall, the coverings of the medium, and the operations of more minor rhetorical figures (such as metaphors, metonymies, or allegories) do not have much to do in these texts. We should also take into consideration the fact that a series is not in itself self-explanatory – finding neighbours in the form of other artistic series brings about interesting interpretative effects. If we consistently insist on a close reading when reading Foks, we will find only disappointment. We will only perceive fragments instead of the whole field of (economic, political and aesthetic) possibilities that made possible the emergence into visibility of this and not that object. We will also be blind to the practices that enabled the introduction of differentiating lines of demarcation between the artistic and nonartistic, the politically meaningful and non-meaningful, acknowledging that such differentiation is something obvious and neutral. What we thereby lose is not so much pleasure in reading as the possibility of assessing the artistic utterance as significant or insignificant at a given point.

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All of the above should be kept in mind when we are reading certain books or poems or examining the work of such authors as Kira Pietrek, Marta Podgórnik or Kamila Janiak. It seems that poets younger than Foks are even more eager to use repetition and interception. In connection with that fact, some of their books or poems constitute useful material for verifying what the benefits and banes of close reading are. Let us carefully consider these three solutions.

The strategy of interception is most easily applied to the poetry of Kira Pietrek, who uses different versions of the Polish language that each have a distinctly defined pedigree: bureaucratic-corporate, government-official, educational, media. These are languages of keeping watch, controlling, defining the current image of reality – always powerful, overbearing.

⁵ Another case where we might talk about contextual art would be the poetry of Eugeniusz Tkaczyszyn-Dycki. While that poet does not include any phrases from social media in his poems, he constantly repeats himself, making it impossible to demarcate a boundary between poems and forcing readers to move beyond readings focused on individual texts. A forerunner of that type of strategy would be, I believe, Tadeusz Różewicz, and also – in a narrower sense – Jarosław Marek Rymkiewicz. These are authors who, in order to demonstrate a theological or metaphysical absence in the earthly world, develop series or cycles and rarely write stand-alone individual poems, particularly Różewicz. Each such series refers to an absent “whole” which it is impossible to make present. Books by Foks (e.g., *Rozmowa z głuchym psem* [Conversation with a Deaf Dog]) or Piotr Przybyła (*Apokalipsa. After party* [Apocalypse. After-Party]) are based on a completely different kind of thinking about the genesis of meanings: they do not originate from some kind of transcendent metaphysical order, but from the material and concrete historical one.

In a text about “the influence of chemicals” in the collection *Język korzyści* (The Language of Profit), Pietrek creates something like a case study of control based on her source material. Individual parts of her text, set apart with numbering, perform the function of a series: their connections establish a bureaucratic-office style of rules, instructions, questionnaires and documents, social surveys and analyses. Thus, for example, in the third series we read: “wpływ architektury i otoczenia mieszkalnego / na zachowanie człowieka i na rozwój / społeczności architektura a dobór naturalny / obszerna praca z badaniami / na różnych terenach / w różnych kręgach kulturowych[.]”⁶ The fourth series, in comparison to the previous one – though it too is composed of signals in an abstract and impersonal language – loosens in form: “wpływ tworzywa na zachowanie się człowieka / tworzywo z jakiego wykonane są przedmioty / jakimi jesteśmy otoczeni[.]”⁷ With the final apposition, “jakimi jesteśmy otoczeni,” Pietrek unmistakably expands her text’s scale of communicative possibilities, introducing signs of non-synthetic speech, a distinct reference to the human world. This “jesteśmy” resounds differently than the alienating formulaic language used previously. Does this difference then represent the stakes for which Pietrek’s poem is playing? Would it be the rhetorical knot that carries within it the most information about the poem’s meaning? Should we in fact attribute the greatest importance to this particular point? Subsequent series do not settle these doubts, and even if we consider the verb “jesteśmy” to be the indicator of a barely visible difference that brings into relief our connection with the world, that decision will result from our attachment to certain ideologies, not from the clues provided in the poem. Meaning, our attachment to language which (grammatically) attempts to give evidence about the speaking subject of the utterance.

The fifth series in the text is the shortest and the most expressive: “życie niewidomych / w dobie kultury wzrokocentrycznej[.]”⁸ We might ponder here, whether according to Pietrek the life of the blind is to become the object of material or financial research, based on procedures of comparison, studies of influence and analyses – the kind of procedures to which cultural events are to be subjected in subsequent series in the work (“kto i dlaczego / stoi za organizacją kto na tym zyskuje / kto na tym traci / ilu zatrudnia się ludzi ilu zwalnia”⁹), educational institutions and the influence of chemicals on human creativity or artists’ self-enrichment processes. To what extent does a potential analysis of “the life of the blind in a sight-centred culture” determine the nature of relations with other bureaucratic analyses mentioned here: revealing their abstraction, displaying their limited range, signalling the need for more extensive research or, on the contrary, revealing their panoptic purpose?

In the final, ninth series, Pietrek changes the neutral-report style to a more abstractly engaged one. It does not elicit any doubts as to what values are accepted and what processes being criticized: “proces alienacji / mięsożernych ludzi od zjadanego zwierzęcia / wychowanie

⁶ the influence of architecture and the living environment / on people’s behaviour and on the development / of the community architecture and natural choice / extensive work in studies / on various territories / in various cultural circles

⁷ influence of material on people’s behaviour / material from which objects are produced / [objects] by which we are surrounded

⁸ the life of the blind / in the time of sight-centred culture

⁹ who and why / stands behind the organization who profits from this / who loses from this / how many people are hired how many fired

proces przejścia na wegetarianizm / zmiany w zachowaniu człowieka // kultura morderstwa / opakowanie trupa w bułkę w kieszonkę zatarcie śladów zbrodni / współczucie wobec zwierzęcia / status pomiędzy człowiekiem a rzeczą (a ryby? robaki?) / uosobienie czy osoba język bajek dwulicowa socjalizacja / kanibalizm w kulturze / wieś miasto / pets udomowione zwierzęta / chów rzeźny tuczenie rozmnażanie śmierć / filmy przyrodnicze ekran / zwierzęcość człowieka autodefinicje / słownik hodowca klient / wierzenia religijne / wegetarianie[.]”¹⁰ Equivalent language forms, points of departure for the observation of human behaviors (points of change and continuity, influence on other beings, objects and other matter), here create what are almost conceptual series – dematerializing real objects, duplicating the structure of the conceptual imagination, which can be developed into effective tools for a policy implemented through their use. What in this poem is subject to interpretation, what is subject to evaluation, and can those processes be separated?¹¹

The slogan-texts selected by Pietrek, as we are well aware, are involved in designating the terms of our everyday life, our work, education, and so on. They are tools of financial and biopolitical control. Of what would an interpretation of the act of presenting them in series form consist? The question of how it happens that texts of this type work for the benefit of poetry? And if so – for the benefit of poetry understood in what sense? Or perhaps interpretation here would involve a newly attentive, detailed, close reading of the sentences that designate the principles of our world but have become transparent and automatic? Pietrek’s poetry would thus act in the name of the aesthetic principle of making visible what – as part of the framing of a given society – distributes the positions of its members’ identities and is responsible for establishing hierarchy. It would enjoin the reader to examine the signs that establish and consolidate the conditions of our existence. And perhaps within the framework of interpretative practice we must ask the question about what purpose is served by Pietrek’s displaying of this kind of communication and what its status is: mockingly parodic? Documentary-reporting?

In any case, we must move beyond close reading in order for Pietrek’s writing enterprises to acquire value and meaning. They require reference to a culture that is no longer based on traditional aesthetic (and institutionalized) behaviours in relation to the artefact (disinterestedness, contemplation or admiration for the created object), being a reaction to the properties of the object in question, but on behaviours that place in doubt the possibility and sense of the coming into existence of that type of object. Pietrek’s verse retains the “coefficient of art,”¹²

¹⁰process of alienation / of meat-eating people from the eaten animal / education process of changing to vegetarianism / changes in human behaviour // culture of murder / packing of corpse in a bun in a pouch removal of traces of the crime / sympathy for the animal / status between person and thing (and fish? Worms?) / personification or person language of fairytales two-faced socialization / cannibalism in culture / country city / pets domesticated animals / breeding for slaughter multiplication of death / nature films screen / bestiality of the human being self-definitions / dictionary of the breeder customer / religious beliefs / vegetarians

¹¹We must address similar questions when we read other poems by Kira Pietrek, such as: “konstytucja,” the untitled poem beginning “główne zadania unesco” (unesco’s main tasks) or the untitled poem beginning “na świecie jest 200 mln bezrobotnych” (there are 200 million unemployed people in the world). “Konstytucja” – to name one example – is an “interception” of phrases from the most important document of the state’s legal apparatus: “rzeczpospolita polska stwarza warunki równego dostępu do dóbr kultury” (the polish republic establishes conditions of equal access to cultural goods), “ochrona środowiska jest obowiązkiem władz publicznych” (protecting the environment is also the duty of public authorities). The whole poem consists of rewritten phrases from the constitution. What would an interpretation of the poem involve, since no part of it was “invented” by the author?

¹²Stephen Wright’s term.

but shifts the weight of art toward reports, documentation or questionnaires, attempting to stretch its artistic competencies to other areas of life. It would be difficult to point to properties of a poem by Pietrek that are capable of being submitted to interpretation (searching for a logic of meaning under the literal surface sense of the words) and evaluation. A close reading oriented strictly toward rhetorical devices (the work of intralinguistic tensions), understood as created especially for the occasion of the particular poem and for its “splendour” or productivity, fails to recognize much of what the poem itself transmits, i.e. its own non-autonomy, its dependence on various canals of distribution, discursive and symbolic practices. This is not a question of intertextuality and the possibility of entrusting an interpretation to poetics broadly understood: it is about an approach to the artistic mode that incorporates the actual conditions of the production of objects and a kind of commentary that takes into account, so to speak, the potential multi-existence of manufactured objects or relations. These might equally be commodities, products, brands or works of what we call art. And that interpretation also decides what they will become at a given moment.

Describing a Pietrek poem as an autonomous system of purposeful elements and failing to perceive experiments other than formal ones – what is most often assumed by close reading – not only abstracts the poem from the cultural and political processes that condition it, but also does not permit us to justify or understand the transformations taking place in art or poetry. Since we do not see how the process of borrowings or assimilations takes place in poetry, we likewise cannot perceive their meanings and values – and then it is easier to make oversimplified assessments, false certainties and evaluations suspended in a void. If we are unable to justify using one set of artistic means rather than another beyond ahistorically formulated aesthetic values (“pretty,” “speaks to me”), that means that we are ready to affirm aesthetic idealism. A formal analysis, obviously, is important here since it allows us to perceive that the meanings of individual series of texts by Pietrek are not cumulative, that none of them is the result of being fitted to particular signifiers, that underscoring the formalism of the author’s bureaucratic documentation heightens the material character of thinking about artistic processes, education, work and our life. But at the same time it is necessary to take into consideration the fact that she places the poem in such a position toward the bureaucratic system that we have an opportunity to see not only the violence of poetry and languages of identity, but also the possibilities they offer.

Kamila Janiak’s texts engender somewhat different problems, especially the poems in her book *Zwęglona Jantar* (Carbonated Jaguar, 2016), which intercepts a neo-expressionistic aesthetic. It is a very curious procedure, since it does not involve – as in Pietrek’s case – the use of public texts, but the use of an aesthetic ideology, well-established in Polish art and literature. It is difficult, however, to treat the various artistic movements ahistorically, which is why we should consider what it means to exploit them anew in the twenty-first century.

We remember that neoexpressionism in art (particularly in the 1980s) was the domain of conservatively and moralistically oriented artists – it was not off the mark when the poets making their debuts in a series of rough copies were called the “New Fauves.” The two acts of postwar expressionism – Abstract Expressionism in the 1950s (Pollock, de Kooning and others) and Neoexpressionism in the 1980s (Baselitz, Kiefer and others) – were accused by some

critics of serving the camouflaging of the ruling ideology's domination. 1980s Neoexpressionism in particular was alleged by them to be a kind of reactionary response to the Reagan and Thatcher era and the crisis in European and American markets. For example, in the opinion of Hal Foster, the triumph of that tendency resulted in a departure from minimalism and conceptualism and brought about a new appreciation for representational art.¹³

The poet's repetition in 2016 of her expressionistic strategies should thus be viewed as an interception of a means of expression that continues to serve conservative and reactionary ideology. In the poems, some remnant of that ideology is recognizable – distorted, filtered through contemporary images and languages. “Annopol – mięso” (Annopol – meat) is a reminiscence of childhood, in which aggressive illustration is linked with the motif, beloved among various expressionists, of meat – “[...] dom jak dom, / ale okolica pachniała surowym mięsem[.]”¹⁴ In Janiak's work, however, this is not a device at the level of illustration, intended to act in the name of moral panic and testify to the general decline of the world, which in poetry and art has been documented by man's conversion into meat. In this poem, the smell of the neighbourhood conveys information about the killing of animals as a basic form of organizing human life. In “ha ha śmierć” (ha ha death) the sacrifice that the subject was to make of her own life in the name of a better future, so typical of, for example, the poems of Tadeusz Miciński, surprises with the complexity of her emotions, particularly humor and desperation: “[...] a będę umierać od jutra tylko częściej! / bo kosmos potrzebuje mojego szaleństwa, / bo kosmos potrzebuje mojej ha ha śmierci!”¹⁵ The rhythm of litany in the poem “królowo” (o queen), introducing the sphere of the sacred within her iconoclastic neoexpressionistic explorations, is cut down at many points by Janiak in a punk rock, materialistic vein: “królowo pracującej polski, oddaj mi proszę pieniądze, oddaj / samochód, bo zarobiłam już na niego sto razy i mieszkanie, / bo walczę z terroryzmem, kupując produkty oznaczone płomyczkiem[.]”¹⁶ We see here how Janiak deflates the historically sanctioned stylistic effects typical for the expressionistic register (clamorousness, use of strong contrasts, hyperboles and expressive imagery) using comic-strip style abbreviation and minimalist reduction: “ptaki spadają ugotowane, samoloty strzelają jak garnek z popcornem, / regularne polowanie, wody parują i żyć nie będzie nic”¹⁷ (“sun core przyszłości” [sun core of the future]). The lofty bombast of expressionistic images of a catastrophic colouring here acquires a completely new quality through the confrontation of military phrases with the comics-esque “popcorn pot[.]” And the poem, instead of identifying desires, elicits effects of isolated sensory experiences and a general cooling of phrase. This is relevant because similar operations cause the identification model of sign reception in the system of expressionism to become very problematic. Janiak speaks, it is true, of a certain community, but her responsibility, if taken at all, is for matters which that community has excluded from itself (animals, nature). This is also evident in

¹³See e.g. G. Dziamski *Przełom konceptualny i jego wpływ na praktykę i teorię sztuki* (The Conceptual Breakthrough and its Influence on Artistic Theory and Practice), Poznań 2010, p. 176: “Proponents of conceptual art saw in this renaissance of painting an expression of art's regression, a return of artistic and political conservatism [...] the new painting was seen as a creation of the market, a product of neoconservative and neoliberal ideology [...]”

¹⁴a house like any other / but the area smelled of raw meat [...].

¹⁵and i'm going to die starting tomorrow only more often! / because the cosmos needs my madness / because the cosmos needs my ha ha death!

¹⁶queen of working poland, give me back my money please, give back / my car because i've earned back the price 100 times and my apartment / because i fight terrorism by buying products stamped with a flame icon

¹⁷birds fall cooked, airplanes shoot like a popcorn pot, / regular hunting, waters steam and nothing will live

the text entitled "O!": "[...] drogie dziecko, to nie wróżka ze świecącym tyłkiem, / to nawet nie robak opchany światłem, to oh! żarówka, / kolba, rozjaśnia pokój, stęka, omdleвам! // a pościel pachnie niby-lasem, nie potem, nie śliną / wali detergentem [...]".¹⁸ The negated (and thereby also evoked) convention of the fairy tale initially outlines a wide horizon of various imaginative possibilities, but finally narrows down to the image of detergents. Those represent an ambiguous figure of invisible forest / nature: they evoke the scent, but also exclude and replace what they evoke.

The merging of minimalist interceptions with a diametrically opposite aesthetic ideology such as neoexpressionism, has historically been for post-minimalism, and is propitious to the balance between the emotional (ethical) engagement of the subject with the world and the poem's de-aestheticizing gesture. In such tangled contexts, we cannot deem collective experiences to be a sign of right-wing populism, ostensibly speaking in the name of the enraged. Janiak's repeated use of post-expressionistic strategies would be devoid of sense if the poet were in fact applying them without admixtures of other strategies at a moment when socio-political relations are tinted by heightened emotions to the same degree as post-expressionist art. It could be said, to quote the title of her latest collection, that Janiak is creating(?) a "carbonated" kind of poem. "Carbonation" would be a metaphor for the historical transformations of the artefact and their result – what remains after the processes of art's consumption (processing) in sociocultural practices, the unexploited part of its artistic energy. There is obviously nothing to stop us from analyzing these poems separately and taking an interest in their widely varied formal procedures – but without paying attention to the fact that expressionist strategies here "give voice to" anxieties and fears from a perspective different from the conservative or reactionary one, it will be difficult to evaluate Janiak's book. We would simply run the risk of reducing it to familiar artistic ideologies. Only a shift of attention from the level of micro-interpretation to an interpretation linked to the aesthetic ideologies of historically defined tendencies offers interpretatively interesting effects.

The poems of Marta Podgórnika are also intriguing from the perspective of interceptions and their aesthetico-ideological meanings, particularly such poems as "Dziewczynka w czerwieni" (The Lady in Red), "Angelus," or "Kiedy łączniczka kocha, chłopcy idą za nią w dym" (When a Liaison Loves, Boys Follow Her Into Smoke), or from the collection *Rezydencja surykatek* (Meerkat Residence). In all of these poems, Podgórnika intercepts texts written by men. They could be acknowledged as merely intertextual, if it were not for the fact that their pastiche character places in doubt the construction of the speaking subject in other of her poems as well. Remembering that this subject is most often a female one, focused on experiences of trauma, failure and defeat in her romantic life, we should ask what is signified by her entering into this type of relations with male texts. This is curious precisely because all the texts that Podgórnika duplicates reproduce a patriarchal model of gender relations.

"Dziewczynka w czerwieni" is an interception of the English-language song by Chris de Burgh, "The Lady in Red," but in it we also hear Marcin Świetlicki's "Finlandia" as performed by Bogusław Linda. "Kiedy łączniczka kocha, chłopcy idą za nią w dym" duplicates one series

¹⁸ dear child, it is not the fortune teller with the shiny bottom, / it is not even the bug crammed with light, it is oh! a light bulb, / a spadix[?], it lights up the room, groans, I am fainting! // and the bedsheet smells sort of like a forest, not sweat, not spit / it reeks of detergent

from the project *Co robi łączniczka* (What Does a Liaison Do) by author Darek Foks and photographer Zbigniew Libera. “Angelus” appropriates the rhythm and words from Jan Czeczot’s song “U prząsniczki siedzą” (Sitting at the Spinner’s; it tells of woman’s treacherous nature). The female subject of Marta Podgórnik’s poem – suffering due to being purely an object of sexual promises, frequently confronting illusions and idealistic imaginings with experience – in these cases duplicates male images depicting love relationships in terms of an idealistic myth. Is Podgórnik here entering the role of a male author, or perhaps entering into a homosexual relationship with men or women? Or is she rather attempting to “remove” from her poem the element of gender rivalry (a feature distinctly marking her poetry in general) and leave only the impression of artistic camp, the magic of seduction (the matrix of glamour); in other words – does the poem arrive at the point that Judith Butler designates as resignification?¹⁹

Thus, when Podgórnik begins the melody: “Nigdy nie wyglądałaś tak pięknie jak w zesłą sobotę./ Nigdy nie błyszczałaś takim blaskiem. Byłaś niemożliwa. /Nigdy ciuchy tak świetnie na Tobie nie leżały, / a Twoje włosy nigdy nie układały się tak idealnie” and adds: “A może to ja byłem ślepy? / Dziewczynko w czerwieni”²⁰ – it rearranges the situation of the utterance in a very significant way, but does not necessarily change its “content.” What we are dealing with here is something almost “viral” – movement does not shift the meanings, they loop together seamlessly. The man who speaks in the text intercepted by the poet seems to be entering a theatrical scene, perhaps a masquerade ball: his expressions of adoration are at first self-deprecating (“I have been blind”), but in the end have the effect of strengthening his position rather than that of the Lady in Red upon whom he is strewing compliments. The poem reveals a fantasy of womanhood materialized in these compliments, by means of which the lady in red is changed into a fetish and an element of spectacle: “nigdy tylu chłopców nie marzyło o chociażby jednym / tańcu z Tobą. Nigdy tylu chłopców nie było gotowych / dla Ciebie na wszystko. I nie mieli szans. / Nigdy tyle osób nie zabiegało o Twoje towarzystwo, / więc kiedy odwróciłaś się do mnie, / zaparło mi dech. // Dziewczynko w czerwieni, // nigdy nie czułem się tak, jak prowadząc Cię / tamtej nocy przez parkiet do wyjścia, /wśród zazdrosnych spojrzeń[.]”²¹ And this almost textbook image of seduction, desire and prestige in the poem is shown in such a way that we are confronted not only with the pressure of dominant cultural models (a male voice distributed in conditions of female composition), but also surrender to them, compliance and the pleasure obtained from this pressure. Negative and critical elements encounter each other in Podgórnik’s oft-mediated sentences, though it seems that the realm of aesthetic pleasure (glamour) carries the day.

¹⁹See. J. Butler, *Excitable Speech. A Politics of the Performative*, New York 1997, pp. 14-15. Butler speaks of resignification when a doubling of hurtful speech occurs, and that takes place whenever citing offensive words is necessary for a critique of them to be made.

²⁰I’ve never seen you looking so lovely as you did last Saturday, / I’ve never seen you shine so bright, You were amazing. / Your clothes never looked so great on you, / Or the highlights in your hair that catch your eyes / And perhaps I have been blind? / The lady in red. [Translator’s note: the text is mostly translated “directly”--so to speak--from de Burgh’s text but with some modifications – where possible I have kept his words, adding as needed. T.W.]

²¹I’ve never seen so many men ask you if you wanted to dance, / They’re looking for a little romance, given half a chance, / I’ve never seen so many people want to be there by your side, / And when you turned to me and smiled, it took my breath away, / The lady in red, / And I have never had such a feeling, as when leading you / That night though the dance floor to the exit/ Amid jealous looks.

Podgórnik's work frequently draws on the spectacle of the glamorous domestication of the female body, which simultaneously is an image representing itself: "soft" mechanisms of control and supervision. At the same time, the repetition of the linguistic formulas that construct that spectacle, heightening in costume form the fetishistic relations between a woman and a man, is ambiguous. For that reason, I believe, an interpretation of Podgórnik's texts – read very effectively as literal stories, built on effects of authenticity and autobiography, entering into a certain relation with feminism – should also take into account the textual mechanisms of diffusion of the (ambivalent) control over meanings which is constructed within patriarchal power structure in society. Can the matrix of glamour, which we know has relaxed its iron chauvinist rules but has in no way annulled them and is rather aestheticizing them in the classical sense of the word, be acknowledged as representing those mechanisms in this poem?²² Precisely this question needs to be contemplated if we are to be tasked with interpreting Marta Podgórnik's poems.

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There is of course no such thing as a theory of interceptions,²³ so that it is not possible to formulate principles for how to proceed with "tangled" objects; naturally there is also no theory of interpretation that would be able to deal effectively with objects of this type and their disinformative illusions. Our reactions to poetic objects are political and cultural reactions rather than theoretical ones and are less dependent on procedures, and still less on philosophical concepts. It seems that we have really seen the last of the traditional philosophical aesthetic – particularly when we read texts in which conceptualism intersects with situationist strategies.

Each of the examples I have cited is, it goes without saying, fundamentally different from the others. Kira Pietrek's work is closest to conceptual strategies, including literary ones from such constellations as Kenneth Goldsmith's conceptual writing or Gary Sullivan's Flarf poetry. Kamila Janiak preserves the importance of the poet's idiolect, intercepting historical macrostyles, while Marta Podgórnik often refers to concrete authorial realizations, incorporating them into her own poems. But in thinking about these poetic strategies in a comprehensive manner, we can make a few more general statements about their interpretation. The interpretation (and value) of a given object is decided not only by how it was formed, but also by how it answers to the current understanding of the role of the artistic object in culture (analyzing, questioning, polemicizing, criticizing, self-inscribing within it, etc.). In other words, what matters is its historical authorization: it could be said that each artistic object is infiltrated by contexts, though not every object interiorizes them, making them an element in a conscious artistic policy.

In the context of interpretative practices, the following question regarding value is relevant: since a poem does not possess meaning in itself, can it be endowed with any kind of meaning

²²On the significance of this category in processes of the de-subjectification of women, see: A. Łuksza, *Glamour, kobiecość, widowisko. Aktorka jako obiekt pożądania* (Glamour, Womanhood, Spectacle. The Actress as Object of Desire), Warszawa 2016.

²³There are instructions by Debord on how to proceed with intercepted messages, but that is not the same thing. See e.g. G. Debord and G. L. Wolman, "Mode d'emploi du détournement," *Les Lèvres Nues*, 1956, no.8, http://sami.is.free.fr/Oeuvres/debord_wolman_mode_emploi_detournement.html (accessed 30 June 2017).

and can it be evaluated in any way? I think that Stanley Fish settled the notion of endowing any kind of object with any kind of meaning some time ago.²⁴ To resist any accusation of subjectivism and interpretative violence, we might also invoke the new materialism, which underscores the social character of knowledge and its material conditioning. That means that the utterance of the subject is not conditioned phenomenologically or transcendently, but immanently and historically. And every artistic object or dematerialized artistic idea should be treated that way and only then evaluated.

But that's not all: keeping in mind the poetic examples analyzed above, we may consider whether the very idea or necessity of evaluation is not placed in doubt by them. How would we designate their value: aesthetic, political, exchange, use? In asking that question, we immediately become aware that evaluation is a social process, one that serves the modelling of a community rather than a qualitative assessment of a poem, and operates at many levels, not necessarily favourable to the expansion of artistic and cultural inclusivity. For that reason, when we interpret conceptual interceptions, it is also good to keep in mind that the object itself often cannot be submitted to interpretation (evaluation), because it constitutes nothing more than a point of departure for interpretative processes which it prompts with its concept. As Stephen Wright writes "[...] in a world where art is not something that is based on objects and subject to evaluation, where there is no authorship, where it consists essentially of a group of competences in circulation, which each person can appropriate – art is breaking away from evaluation."²⁵ This is also, to some extent, what is happening in the examples I have analyzed. That does not mean, however, that we are unable to say which objects are important to us and which are not – but that determination of importance never occurs through the invocation of objectivised values, rather in relation to a change we desire to see effected in social relations (or the maintenance of their status quo). The multi-layered relations between tangled objects force us rather to engage in interpreting those relations, and not merely an object isolated from the sphere of production – which further leads to the interpretation of social relations, whose production is the business of art. In other words, each of the poets discussed here, working with manufactured (not necessarily artistic) objects, also reshapes the forms of artistic production, changes its means and the nature of its relations. The method of producing relations between a variety of art or poetry objects should also become an object of interpretation, leading as it does, in the end, toward the production of human relations.²⁶

²⁴See e.g. S. Fish, *The Stanley Fish Reader*, London 1999.

²⁵*Nie pytaj, co to znaczy, zapytaj, jak tego użyć* (*Don't Ask What It Means, Ask How to Use It*). Seminar by Stephen Wright at the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw. http://www.beczmania.pl/847,nie_pytaj_co_to_znaczy_zapytaj_jak_tego_uzyc.html

²⁶See e.g. N. Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, trans. Simon Pleasance, Fronza Woods, and Mathieu Copeland, Paris 1998.

KEYWORDS

DEBORD

Janiak

corporeality

appropriation

ABSTRACT:

The article deals with problems of interpretation raised by texts based on repetitions or interceptions. After presenting the historical status of artistic objects based on interceptions, the article focuses on the poetry of Marta Podgórnik, Kira Pietrek and Kamila Janiak. Using examples from these poets' poems, it examines problems relating to the political meaning of interceptions, differences between readings concentrating on formal features of a text and those that consider the aesthetic-ideological contexts of texts' entanglements. I also consider how evaluation is dependent on the model of interpretation used.

interception

Polish poetry

PIETREK

Podgórnik**NOTE ON THE AUTHOR:**

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