Micropoetics

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SPIS TREŚCI

Micropoetics

Poetological analyses that delve into various deeper levels of the text draw their energy today from new sources, distinct from those known in even the recent past. The prevalent approach for quite some time – following the structural analysts' exhaustive efforts to reveal all the rigidly demarcated levels of texts – has involved contrarian readings, inspired by post-structuralism and deconstructionism, that showed the unbounded and anarchic movement of freely drifting textual minutiae. The spread of micrological projects indicated, however, that a custom was somehow being revived in them that belonged to the older traditional of philological analyses, of asking questions, even if peculiar ones, proper to poetics. Taking a passionate interest in details, in the micro (today we might rather say the nano), made interpreters hostages of certain philological discoveries, often lacking ready--made theoretical generalizations; such analyses sometimes constituted rather eccentric (micro)case studies, but they also intensified the habit of inquisitively pursuing transitory textual arrangements and tempering them in an effort to give consideration to the literary work's right to self-regulation.

Today literary studies find themselves in a fairly similar situation, which for lack of a better comprehensive term we propose to call micropoetics. Descending into the linguistic particles of a poem, tracing the movement of how the smallest threads are interwoven, chasing after the arrangements of concepts or images outlined in this micro scale represents a new encounter each time with the enigma of a text's agency. As in experiments in the natural sciences, at the nano level we observe hitherto unknown phenomena involving the self-organization of literary works, produce new knowledge about these processes, capable of freeing us from previously existing certainties regarding the orders and disorders of literature. Micropoetics thus becomes knowledge about organs that we didn't know texts possessed, but also about how these tools create their own organon, i.e. a new sequence of categories, principles for reading, and cognitive methods. What is more, discoveries of this kind simultaneously give a glimpse into the dynamic process of organization, the internal links that join texts in certain self-regulating orders, to a large measure independent of their contexts. That is not the end of the matter, because this movement of organization helps us understand the discrete phenomenon of texts' interconnections with a multiplicity of external phenomena, the text's prototyping of new kinds of connections, their production, and

the awakening of their activity. Through micropoetics we can understand how it is possible for a literary work to become a centre for the crystallization of new forms of organization, new organs whose functions are not purely literary. The uncontrollable, uncodifiable, unpredictable world of new knowledge about textual organization is therefore simultaneously a world of new connections between texts and the world, and between the modes for organising the world of texts and new approaches to this.

Micropoetics has become a point of departure for numerous scholars, and in this issue of Forum of Poetics *we seek to showcase Rita Felski's particularly noteworthy reorientation of philological studies. Through her gesture of breaking with ideologies of the literary work still in circulation, Felski reveals her ability to demonstrate the fundamental emancipatory potential of the work, inherent in its capacity to make an impact outside of any pre-existing code or project. The causative agency of texts has frequently been linked with their formal aspects, which direct the readers' attention and regulate the force of receptive tension. As a result, an impression took shape, and took hold, becoming a practical certainty, that a text demands further illumination, analyses, exploration, and encounters, in order for us to have even an inkling of this unidentified microworld's awesome causative power (and that the text itself exists, rather than dissolving in the interpretative context). Only this makes it possible for us to ask the kind of difficult questions that Felski raises in her essay (whose translation we herein publish) about the ability of certain works to exert compelling transtemporal effects.*

The articles in this issue of Forum of Poetics *thus frequently address Felski's book and other works of hers (Elżbieta Winiecka), but also engage in heated dialogue with it, mixing criticism and* apologia *(Marta Baron, Lucyna Marzec). In any case, we propose a broader spectrum of micropoetological reflection in order to show the multiplicity of the initiatives undertaken in this area. We begin with a reminder of the memorable accomplishments of the Silesian micrological school, together with a description by one of the participants (Aleksander Nawarecki). Readings in new Polish poetry lead Jakub Skurtys to add to the Silesian micrology project something which he calls micronautics, a theory (and practice) whose potential benefits result from a state of immersion in (and not merely analysis of) the particles of the poetic work. Micropoetics reveals itself to provide essential training in close scrutiny to scholars of the present time who study video games, as is shown here by Piotr Kubiński, and his important book in that area is discussed in detail by Barbara Kulesza-Gulczyńska. Next, Krzysztof Skibski discovers some exceptional phenomena in the poetic syntax in contemporary poetry, graspable by means of rigorous linguistic analyses. Anna Kałuża reminds us of the Debordian method of interception, and reveals its astonishing use in Polish women's poetry of recent years. Łukasz Żurek's attentive reading of Krystyna Miłobędzka's poetry reveals the important light that a study of punctuation can shed on its meanings. Małgorzata Dorna argues forcefully that a micropoetological analysis can motivate us to return to the widely forgotten prose of Erskine Caldwell. Readers' adventures and discoveries at various microlevels of a work are often guided by the elusive sense of the aptness of a particular fragment of the literary utterance, as Gerard Ronge attempts to elucidate. Finally, Helena Markowska recalls the studies of some later classicists and weighs the reasons why they took a fancy to the concept of what in Polish is called "rozbiór" (dissection or analysis).*

The topic of micropoetics drew strong reactions from the authors of the articles published here, probably unequalled in terms of their vivacity and scope by anything in our previous range of themes. Hence our confidence that, at the level of microreadings, contemporary poetics is in the midst of a thoroughgoing transformation.

On the Silesian Micrological School (1999-2005). A Sprinkling of Reminiscences

Aleksander Nawarecki

The Small, the Silesian, and the Black

These three adjectives are a kind of paraphrase of the memorable triad *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly*. I mention the title of Ennio Morricone's hit soundtrack (from the Sergio Leone film) as a musical emblem of the "spaghetti western," an Italian imitation of American cinema's crowning genre, once regarded with indignation and later acknowledged as anticipating the anti-Western and the deconstruction of the classic form. The mannerism of those films, their exaggeration veering on parody, is something I associate with our micrological adventure. Micrology was the watchword of a series of conferences, debates, MA and PhD theses, individual and collective publications at Silesian University over a period of several years, in which terms featuring the prefixes "mini-" and "micro-" dominated. We repeated those magic words more frequently than the Formalists spoke of form, the Prague Structuralists of structure, or the Geneva critics of theme. The imitative nature of the gesture was obvious; at the beginning of the twenty-first century nobody expected the rise of a new Chicago or Tartu School, let alone a Silesian one. The famous centres of literary studies were no longer forging epochal methods, so the careers of such grand scholarly narratives were thought about with nostalgia and a sense of widening distance. Postmodernism, too, was running out of steam; literary theory was thought of as a closed science, its actual form referred to by the more general term of "Theory." If we were thus doomed to a theory of "everything" and simultaneously "nothing," perhaps we might succeed in averaging out to produce a "theory of the small"? Why not, since a theory "of the written sign" (from Jacques Derrida's *Of Grammatology*) was enjoying great popularity, together with a "study of speed" (the "dromology" of Paul Virilio)?

It was a playful idea, and at the same time a provocative one, more suitable for a young, provincial scholarly milieu than for the great universities of a capital city. It should be no surprise that the studies of the minor, the trivial, the insignificant and even the wretched found a more favorable climate in Silesia than in Warsaw. I am not forgetting our sister province of Greater Poland (Wielkopolska region), however, where at the same time, though completely independently, two essential micrological books, perhaps the two most important ones, appeared: Ewa Domańska's *Mikrohistorie. Spotkania w międzyświatach* (Microhistories. Meetings in Interworlds; Poznań 1999) and Przemysław Czapliński's *Mikrologi ze śmiercią.* (Micrologues with Death; Poznań 2000). If this tendency toward the micro put down its deepest roots in Katowice, however, it was certainly encouraged by the soil there, or rather its erosion. Dark, dirty, industrial Silesia had left behind the splendour of its past as the world's centre of heavy industry; the gigantism of the Gierek years had ended, most smelting works and mines had been closed, and the largest urban agglomeration in the country was becoming atomized rather than growing into a metropolis. Few standing in teh shadow of Spodek and Superjednostka thought about "trifles," but perhaps we were assisted by the aura of economic and ecological dispersion, dissipation and degradation?

Basic Information

What we know for sure is that a series of three volumes came out at that time, collectively entitled *Miniatura i mikrologia literacka*, (Literary Miniature and Micrology, Katowice 2001-2003), supplemented (or "running into overtime") with the collection *Skala mikro w badaniach literackich* (The Micro Scale in Literary Studies, Katowice 2005). All four publications were released by the University of Silesia Press, edited by me with assistance from M.Szczęsny, B.Mytych and M.Bogdanowska. The scholarly reviewers for publication of the successive volumes were: M.Kalinowska, J.Sawicka, A.Fiut, L.Wiśniewska. Those four volumes constitute the bulk of the "school's" activity: a total of 1000 pages, comprised of 53 texts by 40 authors, of whom 34 were affiliated with the University of Silesia and six were guests (including some from France and the USA).[1] An additional, final supplement was my book *Mały Mickiewicz. Studia mikrologiczne* (Little Mickiewicz. Micrological Studies; Katowice 2003), as well as a series of translations made at that time (the final version consisted of translations of R.Barthes and G.Bachelard).[2] The caesura closing off the era was the year 2005, though several of the authors most heavily involved with the series constructed a "side project" of their own vision of micrology, whose effects were enunciated much later on. Janusz Ryba, a connoisseur of Enlightenment "bibelots," published his filigree essays in *Uwodzicielskie oblicze oświecenia* (The Seductive Side of the Enlightenment, Katowice 2002). Beata Mytych incorporated her work on the trace and the trope into her "hunting" monograph, *Poetyka i łowy. O idei dawnego polowania w literaturze XIX wieku* (Poetics and Hunting. On the Idea of the Ancient Hunt in 19th Century Literature, Katowice 2004). Aleksandra Kunce transferred the "charm of

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[1] Here is a list of all of the authors included: M.Bąk, W.Bojda, E.Buksa, R.Cudak, J.Dembińska-Pawelec, M.Dziaczko, A.Dziadek, P.Fast, W.Forajter, T.Głogowski, I.Gralewicz-Wolny, E.Grodzka-Łopuszyńska, R.Grześkowiak, E. Hurnikowa, P.Jędrzejko, M.Jochemczyk, Z.Kadłubek, J.Kisiel, A.Kołodziej, R.Koropeckyj, A.Kunce, J.Leociak, P.Michałowski, K.Mokry, B.Mytych, A.Nawarecki, J.Olejniczak, M.Nowotna, D.Noras, U.Paździor, M.Piotrowiak, J.Różyc-Molenda, J.Ryba, T.Stępień, A.Szawerna Dyrszka, M.Szczęsny, B.Szargot, M.Szargot, A.Węgrzyniak, S.Zając.

[2] See R.Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans. Richard Howard, Annette Lavers, New York 2013; G.Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, trans. Maria Jolas, London 2014, esp. chapter 7, "Miniature."

micrology" to the area of cultural studies, where she presented here treatise on "the study of punch lines": *Antropologia punktów. Rozważania przy tekstach Ryszarda Kapuścińskiego* (Anthropology of Points. Thoughts on Texts of Ryszard Kapuściński, Katowice 2008). Wioletta Bojda, author of the programmatic *Historia miniatury,* more recently published the monograph *Anny Świrszczyńskiej odkrywanie rzeczywistości* (The Discovery of Reality by Anna Świrszczyńka, Katowice 2015), whose middle section (140 pages) is devoted to the topic of miniature. Zbigniew Kadłubek and Mariusz Jochemczyk have steadfastly carried out their own projects in Silesian studies and oikology, but in their work on the Silesian "minority" have a sense of being in tune with micrological inspirations.[3] Iwona Gralewicz-Wolny has used a different rhetoric in her public scolding of fellow micrologists for their negect of children's literature; the author of *Uwolnić Pippi* (Free Pippi, co-written with B.Mytych-Forajter) is nowadays repaying those "childish" oversights with interest.[4] A final example of continuity is presented by the collective volume: *Balaghan. Mikroświaty i nanohistorie*, edited by M.Jochemczyk, M.Kokoszka and B.Mytych-Forajter (Katowice 2015). Published ten years after the conclusion of the micrological series, the book represents a kind of sentimental reactivation of it. It offers, among other things, texts by 17 of the authors published in *Miniatura i mikrologia*; next to those "veterans" we find new scholars of "disappearance" and "recesses" – so a new generation of nano-experts has risen?

Literary Miniature and Micrology

I return to the crucial series of volumes we published; the core of its authorship consisted of people working in the Department of Literary Theory- disciples of Ireneusz Opacki. If we keep that in mind, it is possible to see in "Silesian micrology" a continuation, or perhaps only a branch, of the school of the "art of interpretation" founded by our Master in the mid-1970s. We must necessarily include the reservation that Opacki did not care for what was tiny, cramped, or squeaky; as an outstanding interpreter of Romantic masterpieces, he was accustomed to distancing himself from the aesthetic limitations of the previous epoch – whether sentimental emotionalism, rococo perversions or classicist pedantry. But he liked to begin his lectures and articles with a presentation of items that were seemingly trivial or banal, such as, to name a few, Lechoń's short "brazier poem" ("Śmierć Mickiewicza" [The Death of Mickiewicz]), Prus's short short story "Z legend dawnego Egiptu" (From the Legends of Ancient Egypt; a modest preliminary sketch for his novel *Faraon* [The Pharaoh]) or the epilogue to *Pan Tadeusz* (a troublesome appendix to that epic, initially omitted by the publishers).[5] In the course of his interpretation, these diminutive texts quite unexpectedly acquired the gleam of authentic greatness; Opacki elicited a sense of the sublime by working audaciously with the dialectic of great and small. At the same time, we should remember that

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[3] See *Kwiatki świętego Franciszka z Asyżu* (The Little Flowers of St. Francis of Assisi), trans. L.Staff, Warszawa 1959, p.353.

[4] See "Czarne krasnoludki. Zamiast wstępu... Z Aleksandrem Nawareckim rozmawiają Beata Mytych Forajter i Iwona Gralewicz-Wolny" (Black Dwarves. In Lieu of an Introduction... A Conversation with Aleksander Nawarecki by Beata Mytych Forajter and Iwona Gralewicz-Wolny), in: *Par Coeur. Twórczość dla dzieci i młodzieży raz jeszcze*, (Par Coeur. Another Look at Works for Children and Youth), Katowice 2016, pp.19-20.

[5] I have written more on this subject in: "Skarb w Srebrnym Jeziorze. O sztuce retorycznej Ireneusza Opackiego" (The Trasure in the Silver Lake. On the Rhetorical Art of Ireneusz Opacki), in: *Znajomym gościńcem. Prace ofiarowane Profesorowi Ireneuszowi Opackiemu* (A Familiar Guest. Works Dedicated to Prof. Ireneusz Opacki), ed. T.Sławek, Katowice 1993, pp. 181-190.

he had been taught by Czesław Zgorzelski, the author of pioneering studies of Słowacki's and Mickiewicz's miniatures, in which he obsessively tried to understand the mystery of the powerful influence of lyrical scraps, fragments, shreds and patches (viewed with formalist inquisitiveness).[6]

It is not surprising that, having learned from such teachers, we showed a preference for interpretative texts devoted to Polish poetry; in our "tetralogy" there were monographic sections on Mickiewicz and Leśmian, three studies of Białoszewski, and a series of essays whose protagonists were Polish poets of the twentieth century (as follows: Grochowiak, Barańczak, Pawlikowska, Sztaudynger, Wojaczek, Wat, Bujnicki, Kamieńska, Miciński, Szymborska, Baczyński, Różewicz, Zagajewski, Rymkiewicz). As for prose authors, they were mostly those closer to the model of poetic prose, beginning with Haupt and Schulz (two essays each), followed by Gombrowicz, Tyrmand and Huelle. Next to analytical and historical texts there appear several theoretical explorations, among which those presenting classic theoreticians are particularly important: *Sztuka mikrolektury Rolanda Barthesa* (Roland Barthes's Art of Microreading, A.Dziadek), *Mikroskopia Romana Jakobsona* (Roman Jakobson's Microscopy) and *Przyziemne intuicje. Carlo Ginzburga „Znaki, oznaki, poszlaki"* (Earthy Intuituions. Carlo Ginzburg's *Threads and Traces*, both B. Mytych). We ventured outside of our native literature into Roman antiquity (Z.Kadłubek, E.Buksa), English (P.Jędrzejko), French (J.Ryba, M.Nowotna), Russian (P.Fast) and Austrian (E.Hurnikowa) literature; there were also voyages to other continents – namely, America and Japan (A.Kunce). The scope of Kunce's reflections encompassed the cinema, while K.Mokry dealt with the visual arts and J.Leociak – photography. Among the few guest authors from outside our university, we should highlight the contribution of Roman Koropecky, the American author of a monumental biography (*Adam Mickiewicz. The Life of a Romantic*. Ithaca and London 2008), who gave us a study of "worms" in *Pan Tadeusz*, corresponding in some aspects to "Pchła – zapomniany temat erotyczny dawnej poezji" (The Flea – A Forgotten Topic of Erotic Poetry of Old), an eccentric work by Radosław Grześkowiak, anticipating his later full-length zoocritical monograph (*Amor Curiosis*. Gdańsk 2013). It is a delight as well to see the presence in those volumes of two of the precursors of Polish micrology: Piotr Michałowski, author of *Miniatura poetycka* (Poetic Miniature, Szczecin 1999), and Jacek Leociak, coauthor (with B.Engelking) of the microhistorical "encyclopedia" *Getto warszawskie. Przewodnik po nieistniejącym mieście* (The Warsaw Ghetto: Guide to a Lost City, Warszawa 1997).

What Is Micrology?

The four-volume series also included three programmatic texts of mine, discussing the successive phases of the micrological project – from the introductory premises, through the attempt to describe the phenomenon, up to the final summing-up and closing. The initial statement ("Mikrologia, genologia, miniatura" [Micrology, Study of Genres, Miniature])[7] was

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[6] I attempted to trace out a portrait of the Lublin micrologist in my essay "Dumania w dzień odjazdu. O tonie elegijnym Czesława Zgorzelskiego" (Dumiana on the Day of Departure. On Czesław Zgorzelski's Elegiac Tone), in *Polonista na katedrze* (Polish Studies Scholar in the Department), ed. M.Łukaszuk, Lublin 2017 (in the course of issue).

[7] See A.Nawarecki, "Mikrologia, genologia, miniatura," in *Miniatura i mikrologia literacka*, ed. A.Nawarecki, Katowice 2000, pp. 9-28.

first prepared for a session devoted to genre studies, hence the point of departure consisted of elementary questions: is it possible to shrink genres? Does the division into "big" and "small" genres make sense? Contrary to appearances, questions concerning scale are difficult and tricky (even for engineers). The only scholar of "low-capacity texts," Jan Trzynadlowski, in writing *Małe formy literackie* (Small Literary Forms 1977), confined himself to the level of descripton and his general impression that the acceleration of civilization dictated a shortening and narrowing of forms. The subtler author of *Miniatury poetyckie* focused on poetry, correctly presenting the catgeory of the "miniature," but the etymology of that term somehow escaped Michałowski's attention: contrary to popular belief, it derives not from the Latin adjective *minimus* (small), but from *minium* (lead oxide), the red dye used by medieval miniaturists to write the most important parts of their texts, i.e., theological concepts, important thoughts and symbols. The Gothic miniature did not refer to a minor composition of modest proportions, but the importance and even exceptionality of the message being relayed. The surprising eloquence of the term is a signal that thinking about the minature is marked by subtlety, elusivenss, and even paradoxicality. This thread was also developed in the Introduction to the second volume, where the concept of micrology eluded an attempt at definition: "we do not control this word, which is almost a neologism; we do not know how it is understood or what it will be in the future."[8] But I was sure at the time that we were not talking about a "new method" (for it was neither new nor methodical); a "micro" dimension can be discovered in almost every theory, in all acts of inquiring observation or analysis- "You, too, can become a micrologist!" After such a democratic and hospitable opening, their appeared fears of the easiness, or even trivialization of our practices, hence the sharper tone of the essay that concludes the cycle, "Czarna mikrologia" (Black Micrology). In the title one can hear an echo of Czapliński's book, but the micro scale is here linked not with death, but with the sublime in modern art (J-F.Lyotard), and also with everyday life, which "Has a small dimension. High frequency. It is imperceptible" (J.Brach –Czaina). The third aspect is technique, an absolutely fundamental context, though previously overlooked; but in fact everything began with the microscope (unveiling the abyss of the microcosm), while it ends with the might of ever new and more perfect nanotechnologies. Micrology in a *noir* style reveals some kind of ghastliness and brutality; perhaps that was a side effect of my brushes with Mickiewicz's "greatness," for is it an act befitting a Polonist to bring the national bard "down to size"?

Here I return to the first essay in the book *Mały Mickiewicz*, in which critics were eager to perceive an explanation of micrology. Michał Paweł Markowski saw its dominant in the Romantic (mysterious and mythical) aura whose patron saints would – surprisingly – be the philosophical duo Benjamin and Adorno, together with the message: "micrology is, for metaphysics, salvation from the endeavors of intellectual greed."[9] Beata Gontarz, on the other hand, was inclined to find in micrology a "homegrown equivalent to a personal version of deconstruction," with Derrida and Hillis Miller as its patrons.[10]

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[8] A.Nawarecki, Introduction to *Miniatura i mikrologia literacka*, vol. 2, ed. A.Nawarecki, Katowice 2002, p. 8.

[9] See M.P.Markowski, "Miłe/Małe" (Nice/Small), *Tygodnik Powszechny* 2004, no. 44, p.13.

[10] B.Gontarz, "Dekonstruowanie Mickiewicza" (Deconstructing Mickiewicz), in *Adam Mickiewicz. Dwa wieki kultury polskiej* (Adam Mickiewicz. Two Centuries of Polish Culture), ed. K.Maciąg, M.Stanisz, Rzeszów 2007, p. 570.

God Is Small

In these projects, alongside the philosophical authorities mentioned above, I cited theologists as well: from Pseudo-Dionysus to St. Thérèse of Lisieux (The "Little Flower"), who in 1997 was declared a Doctor of the Church, but the theological, or rather crypto-theological, thread, did not enjoy wide reverberations. I was therefore all the more surprised to note an event that occurred in the Silesian Voivodeship (where Częstochowa is situated) on 17 August 2016 during the celebrations of the 1050th anniversary of the christening of Poland. This great religious and national milestone was marked with monumental pomp and solemnity at Jasna Góra, with bishops, the president, other government officials and members of parliament, the diplomatic corps, thousands of accredited journalists and faithful believers from all over the world assembled together during World Youth Day festivities there. The most important guest, Pope Francis, read a sermon for the occasion, which I would like to examine here more closely, for the reason, as well, that it was scarcely commented upon at the time. Perhaps the reason had to do with the guiding motif, the adjective *piccolo*, repeated at least ten times.[11] The intense frequency of the word "little," intensified by the presence of similar epithets (simple, ordinary, modest, quiet, discreet), so very strongly dominated the sermon that there was almost no reference to history with a capital H in it (not even to Mieszko and Dąbrówka, whose historical role was taken over by our "mothers and grandmothers"). From the national pantheon we saw only Faustyna Kowalska and Karol Wojtyła, situated, as faithful advocates of the mystery of Mercy, in the circle of "little ones" (John Paul the Great – as a humble and "meek" saint!) But it could not be otherwise, given that "God always shows himself in littleness"; the greatest event of all – the divine embodiment in human form – did not take place in a triumphal spirit, but in a manner imperceptible to the world. The Lord is like "the smallest of all seeds" (Mk 4:31), he, too, was a small child, and the first manifestation of his divinity in maturity, the transformation of water into wine, was a "simple miracle," all the humbler because it occurred in a "little village," among poor, obscure people. And that same "simple miracle" (quite an oxymoron) was treated by the Pope as the topic of his sermon at the ceremony, since on that day in Częstochowa, things were as they were at the wedding in Cana (and as it must have been in the court of the Piast kings) – a cheerful gathering of family and friends at the table with wine: "God saves us […] by making himself little, near and real. First God makes himself little."

It was an astonishing speech, recognizably rooted in the Gospels, but resonating also with the radical commentary of the desert fathers' apophthegms and negative theology as well. The other chief primary source is the thought of Saint Francis, the apologist of the "little brothers," understandable from a Pope who chose to take as his papal name that of the "beggar of Assisi." There is also, with this first Jesuit Pope, the Jesuit context, relating to Saint Ignatius of Loyola's personal micrology, the essence of which is supposed to be expressed in the inscription said to be carved on his tomb: "Non coerceri maximo contineri tamen a minimo, divinum est" (To not be limited even by what is greatest, and to be contained in what is smallest, is divine). The maxim does not belong to Loyola, but is a monastic apocryph popularized

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[11]Quoted from: Vatican Radio, "Pope Francis marks 1050th anniversary of 'Baptism of Poland,'"
  http://en.radiovaticana.va/news/2016/07/28/pope_francis_marks_1050th_anniversary_of_baptism_of_
  poland/1247369.

by Hölderlin, who chose it as the epigraph to his poem *Hyperion*.[12] Pope Bergoglio is well-acquainted with the fragment and has publicly quoted it, including in Hölderlin's version, in the original and from memory. To learn from memory is, as we say in English, to "learn by heart," or as Derrida has it, "to take to heart," where he thinks of the poem that should be internalized with all our heart, swallowed, curled up within us.[13] "[A] poem must be brief, elliptical by vocation," since God reveals himself as small.

Is Micrology an Innovation?

The theological, or perhaps rather religious and devotional, context should be supplemented or contrasted with the perspective of contemporary science. The relevant question regarding the "innovative nature of Silesian micrology" was raised recently by Ewelina Suszek; in her extensive and inquiring study, Suszek even considers whether it has "a chance of becoming a fashionable interpretative practice?"[14] She contemplates the problem in the light of Wallerstein's theory (according to which innovation is a privilege of the centre) and the "peripheral" conception of Florida, but treated Ryszard Nycz's definition of innovation, the first condition of which is "an original solution to an essentially relevant problem," the second, "development of a repeatable procedure," and the third, grounding "in a method that leads to the discovery of a problem area" and finally the "initiation of a new field," as her decisive criterion.

There are many eloquent arguments in favor, but none of them entirely persuasive, because the micrologists themselves decline the privilege of pioneerhood: "We were only trying to integrate the 'micropoetics' of Gaston Bachelard, the 'microreading' of Jean-Pierre Richard, Jakobsonian 'microscopy' and Barthes's theory of the punctum as well as other concepts of 'micropoetics' or 'microscopic phenomenology' encountered at the borderline of literary criticism and philosophy in the writings of Walter Benjamin, Theodor Adorno, Jacques Derrida, and Jean-Francois Lyotard."[15] In this admission, there can be discerned an "intriguing fusion, a surprising hybrid, an often innovative combination of what are frequently fashionable tendencies;" similar unions of the humanities and natural sciences can occur even in Poland, "but the scholarly triumph that carried the day was that of microbiologists, microphysicists and microeconomists."[16] Suszek appreciates the innovative effort to transfer such inspiration to literary studies, but also observes a deconstructive counter, a programmatic reluctance to repeating tested procedures, an adherence to the spirit of invention rather than that of repeatable innovation. That is why she tries to acknowledge as a criterion in her inquiry "intellectual fashion," a status of some weight in the humanities, but here, too, indecision looms,

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[12]See M.Bednarz, "Sekret osobowości św. Ignacego Loyoli" (The Secret of Saint Ignatius Loyola's Personality), in I.Loyola, *Pisma Wybrane. Komentarze* (Selected Writings of I. Loyola. Commentaries), vol.2, Kraków 1968, p. 570; A. Spadero, *Ignacjańskie korzenie reformy Kościoła papieża Franciszka* (The Ignatian Roots of Pope Francis's Reform of the Church), trans.. J.Poznański, „*Posłaniec Serca Jezusowego* (Messenger of Jesus's Heart) 2016, no. 8.

[13]J.Derrida, "Che cos'è la poesia?" in *A Derrida Reader: Between the Blinds*, ed. and trans. Peggy Kamuf, New York 1991, p. 225.

[14]E.Suszek, "Moda na małe? Innowacyjność śląskiej mikrologii literackiej" (A Fashion for the Small? The Innovative Nature of Silesian Literary Micrology), *Postscriptum Polonistyczne* 2016, no. 1, pp. 179-191.

[15]A.Nawarecki, *Mały Mickiewicz*, Katowice 2003, p. 11.

[16]E.Suszek, *"Moda na małe?..."* p. 180.

because there are imitators of the Silesian "micro" school in Kielce, though it is harder to find any in Kraków.[17]

To these considerations of the innovative nature of our micrology I would add an argument that appears in the work of E. Rogers and other scholars of innovative diffusions, who believe that the essence of such processes is perfectly expressed by Schopenhauer's remark on the three phases of learning the truth: "To truth only a brief celebration of victory is allowed between the two long periods during which it is condemned as paradoxical, or disparaged as trivial."[18] And if that is the case, then it gives me pleasure to report that our founding text, "Mikrologia, genologia, miniatura," read at the twenty-ninth conference on Literary Theory organized by my alma mater, the Department and Workshop of Historical Poetics of the Polish Academy of Sciences' Institute of Literary Studies (on September 17-22, 1999 in Cieszyn) was not granted approval for publication in the subsequent conference volume, *Genologia dzisiaj* (The Study of Genres Today, ed. W.Bolecki, I.Opacki, Warszawa 2000). I have been unable to get access to the review, but I flatter myself to conjecture that my paper was found absurd and elicited strong opposition.

Micropoetic Beginnings

While I am bursting with pride at having been the "initiator" of Silesian micrology, let me ride this wave and try to show where the initial impulse lay. The first term used, undoubtedly taken from Bachelard or Bakhtin, was "micropoetics." It was not a flight of inspiration but rather a moment of downward inclination, because all micropoetic activity is close to the earth; in a Franciscan style, we do it "lowering the head to slither about the earth on our bellies," and, according to the rules of philology, with our noses buried in papers.[19] For Zgorzelski, a founding micrological moment appears to be the encounter with a manuscript of Mickiewicz's Lausanne lyrics – a sheet covered with illegible scrawls, an ill-treated scrap of paper on which the poet's most beautiful poems (de facto mere fragments) had landed. I experienced similar emotions while counting up the periods and commas in the Lausanne manuscript, but I had earlier been astonished when reading the poems of Baka in the one surviving first edition of *Uwagi śmierci niechybnej* (Comments on Certain Death, 1766). My encounter with this tattered, dog-eared leaflet convinced me that the original differed in major aspects from the widely familiar version of the text (the anonymously published edition from 1807). In the original, the author, a Jesuit priest in Wilno (Vilnius) arranged his poems in the form of a regular stanza (with lines of the following successive syllabic lengths: 8+8+6+6):

> Za igraszkę śmierć poczyta,
> Gdy z grzybami rydze chwyta:
>   Na dęby ma zęby,
>   Na szczepy ma sklepy.

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[17]Suszek points to the case of the reception of Silesian micrology (A.Wileczek, *Świadectwa-ślady-znaki. Lapidarium jako strategia formy* [Testimonials, Traces, Signs. Rock Collection as a Strategy of Form], Kielce 2010) and its omissions (A.Zawadzki, *Obraz i ślad* [Image and Trace]. Kraków 2014).

[18]A Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, trans. E. F. Payne, New York 1969, vol. 1, p. xvii.

[19]See M.Jochemczyk, *Wobec tradycji. Śląskie szkice oikologiczne* (Toward Tradition. Silesian Oikological Essays). Katowice 2015; Z.Kadłubek*, Bezbronne myśli. Eseje i inne pisma o Górnym Śląsku* (Defenseless Thoughts. Essays and Other Writings on Upper Silesia), Katowice 2016.

Cny młodziku migdaliku,
Czerstwy rydzu ślepowidzu,
　　Kwiat mdleje, więdnieje.
　　Być w kresie, Czerkiesie.[20]

(We read death for a plaything / when we pick poisonous with good mushrooms; / oaks have teeth, / seedlings have monuments, / the virtues of a young man a fop, / the health of a milk cap a blind man, / bloom withers and fades. / The Circassian will have his end.)

Whereas the new publisher in 1807, the satirist Julian Korsak, aiming to achieve a comic effect, spread out the eight-line poem into a longer series of truncated lines:

Za igraszkę śmierć poczyta,
Gdy z grzybami rydze chwyta:
　　Na dęby
　　Ma zęby,
　　Na szczepy
　　Ma sklepy.
　　Cny młodziku
　　Migdaliku
　　　　　Czerstwy rydzu,
　　　　　Ślepowidzu.[21]

(We read death for a plaything / when we pick poisonous with good mushrooms; / oaks / have teeth, / seedlings / have monuments, / the virtues of a young man / a fop, / the health of a milk cap / a blind man.)

Thus this was how the eighteenth-century rhymer became the author of "interminable" poems that sometimes resemble avant-garde "stair" poems. The misrepresented Baka not only used unique tetrasyllabic forms, but also three-line measures- never used since in Polish versification. His famously "scanty" poem, also called "buck-shot," accentuated by clamorous rhyme, became a poetic scandal and aroused merriment or contempt, enhanced by the fact that his sing-songy poems deal exclusively with death and dying. Baka quickly became known as the worst scribbler in Polish literature, before becoming known as an eccentric who fascinated the Romantics (Mickiewicz, Syrokomla, Kraszewski), while for poets of the twentieth century (Pawlikowska, Wat, Czechowicz, Miłosz, Twardowski, Rymkiewicz) he became an absolutely phenomenal poet.

There would be no legend of Baka, nor transformation of a poetaster into a genius, if his stanza and versification had not been "chopped up" into a pulp. And this micropoetic occurrence, at the level of stanza, line, and rhyme, was to have unimaginable consequences! In

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[20]J.Baka, *Uwagi*. Eds. A.Czyż, A.Nawarecki. Lublin 2000, s.62.

[21]*Baka odrodzony. Uwagi o śmierci niechybnej wszystkim pospolitej* (Baka Reborn. Comments on Certain Death Common to Everyone), ed. W.Syrokomla. Wilno 1855, pp. 96-97.

the context of Baka's "little death" it becomes acutely visible that micrology is not limited to small things; no less important is the aspect of degradation, rejection, even repulsion (the status of fragments, crumbs, remnants, scraps, refuse, dejecta, offal, and so on). From the perspective of the philologist, however, what remains most important is focusing on the visual, morphological or stylistic detail, for that opens our eyes to the world, and not only the world of literature.

Keywords | Abstract | Note on the Author ● ● ●

KEYWORDS

micrology

Abstract:

The text recalls the history of "micrological" studies at Silesian University in Katowice: the three collective volumes of *Miniatury i mikrologii literackiej* 2000-2003; *Skala mikro w badaniach literackich* (2005) and the book written by the cycle's editor, A.Nawarecki, *Mały Mickiewicz (*2003) as well as the monographs by J.Ryba, B.Mytych, A.Kunce, W.Bojda. 40 authors participated in the series; the idea of studies in the small, minute and despised was inspired by the masters of the "art of interpretation," I.Opacki and Cz. Zgorzelski. The Silesian school is compared with its Poznań counterpart (E.Domańska, P.Czapliński), its innovative aspects, regional and provincial roots, and initial philological impulse (Baka's "micropoetics") discussed as well as its historical, political, and religious contexts (including Pope Francis's theology emphasizing the *piccolo*).

SILESIOLOGY

m i c r o p o e t i c s

NOTE ON THE AUTHOR:
Aleksander Nawarecki is a professor and director of the Department of Literary Theory at Silesian University; a scholar of curiosities, editor of and commentator on the poetry of Józef Baka (*Czarny karnawał* [Black Carnival], Wrocław 1991), author of books on plants and animals in literature (*Pokrzywa* [Nettle], Chorzów-Sosnowiec 1996*),* on objects (*Parafernalia* [Paraphernalia], Katowice 2014), essays on Mickiewicz (*Mały Mickiewicz,* Katowice 2003) and on Silesia (*Lajerman* [Organ-Grinder], Gdańsk 2011). He is the coauthor of the textbook *Przeszłość to dziś* (The Past is Today, Warszawa 2003), editor of the series *Miniatura i mikrologia literacka* (Katowice 2000-2003) and of the book *Historyczny słownik terminów literackich* (Historical Dictionary of Literary Terms; in preparation).

"To look darkness. To subside":

From Micropoetics to Micropolitics and Back Again (On Method)

Jakub Skurtys

Microscopy: the Experience of Seeing

> It's like a set of split rings. You can fit any one of them into any other. Each ring or each plateau ought to have its own climate, its own tone or timbre.

> Gilles Deleuze on the composition of *A Thousand Plateaus*[1]

I would like to begin my essay by mentioning a book for young people written over 60 years ago by the once highly esteemed popularizer of science Tadeusz Unkiewicz, the first editor of the journal *Problemy*. I have in mind P*odróże mikrokosmiczne prof. Rembowskiego* (The Microcosmic Travels of Prof. Rembowski; first edition 1956, second edition 1962), a short book bordering between science, science fiction and adventure, in the spirit of Jules Verne, and directly invoking the legacy of the author of *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*. What are important here are the titular "microcosmic travels" undertaken by Polish inventor and professor of biology Jan Rembowski and his younger companion and nephew, the fifteen- year-old Syga. As their travels are "microcosmic," those journeys involve things that are small or miniature, and thus fulfil at least three centuries of daydreams about fathoming the mysteries of the microworld: the world at the level of viruses, bacteria and cellular life.

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[1] G. Deleuze, *Negotiations 1972–1990*, trans. Martin Joughin, New York: Columbia University Press, 1995, p. 25.

The very technology of these journeys is unusual: Rembowski constructs a device that he calls a "physioscope," the equivalent of a virtual microscope that can be joined to an organism, enabling the user to actively look into the world of cells, but also to move around in it. The device's activity is explained to the reader in detail in the opening pages of the book, and its essence weaves together popular science methods and pure fantasy. The physioscope does not, however, reduce the size of the human being, as does, for example, the device invented by Wayne Szalinski in the famous film *Honey, I Shrunk the Kids* (1989), but through the inversion of reflections, reduces "his sight":

> "now I am merely clarifying," the professor explains to the young assistant before their first journey, "that my purpose was to reduce the human being's sight, reduce it in such a way that he would see, for example, a bacterium from the bacterium's point of view, and so in such a way as if the human being were himself a being belonging to that 'little world.' But I was not content with the situation of an observer remaining motionlessly in one place. I needed to do something more. I needed to acquire freedom of movement.[2]

Thus an external control system was developed using the prototype of a kind of joystick and heat insulation enabling enclosure within a microorganic artificial eye, henceforth charged with directing the traveller's cognitive apparatus. From the outside, this looks very strange: the explorer, wearing an enormous helmet that attaches him to a microscope, sits immobile next to the machine, while somewhere in the microworld, in the Elmis (short for electro-micro-scuba), his "third eye," exposed to all the dangers of collisions, fissures, and conflicts with other organisms, takes a journey.

The story is far from banal and transcends the realm of tales for children, especially if we consider the oculocentric fantasies of modernity: the eye separated from the body, prosthetic, reduced to the size of a single cell, travelling through organic space, looking inside what is generally hidden in darkness, into the very Inside.[3] With their heads concealed in helmets, the microcosmic travellers are dead ringers for the contemporary human being, plunged into virtual reality, with a slightly overgrown version of Oculus Rift on their heads (making them a postmodern reboot of Acephalic Man?). However, what seems most intriguing about the physioscope is not its capability of "magnifying" the world or "reducing sight," but the impression of full immersion that it creates. "I can see... I can see... I can see...," an enraptured Syga declares at first. "I'm in water... as if in water... I feel entirely as if it were surrounding me...".[4]

It is possible to lose oneself in this feeling, and that is, naturally, the fate that meets the young hero, who decides to journey alone into the dangers of microspace instead of heeding the professor's warning. The microscope cannot be damaged from the outside, because it is protected from the haphazard movements of the human body, but Elmis is subject to damage from the inside in the

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[2] T. Unkiewicz, *Podróże mikrologiczne profesora Rembowskiego (The Micrological Travels of Prof. Rembowski)*, second edition, Warszawa 1962, p. 8.

[3] On the topic of this and other similar fantasies of modernity, see T. Swoboda, *Historie oka: Bataille, Leiris, Artaud, Blanchot (Story of the Eye: Bataille, Leiris, Artaud, Blanchot)*, Gdańsk 2010; see also J. Momro, *Widmontologie nowoczesności. Genezy (Phantomologies of Modernity. Geneses)*, Warszawa 2014, pp. 11–19

[4] Unkiewicz, *Podróże...*, p. 12.

microworld, e.g. if it collides with other devices or organisms. And as happens in cases of full immersion, a fissure in the artificial eye will have the inevitable effect of sending false nerve impulses to the brain, disturbing the proper functioning of human organs (here we reach a layer fascinating to Gilles Deleuze, who will reappear several times later in the text). That is why "microcosmic travels" are, as the professor warns, deadly dangerous. Syga nearly pays for his imprudent excursion with his life, and though he is successfully saved in the end, he loses the sharpness of vision in one eye permanently. Is this just an accident, or punishment for disobeying his elders, for imprudence, or is it in fact a Biblical reference, an allegory of disgrace, the equivalent of Jacob's broken hip (Genesis 32:25)?

This innocent, educational, inspirational little story begins with what is less a warning than an assertion of the indefatigable passion and unyielding dedication of explorers, of the price they are willing to pay in the name of glimpsing "into the deep":

> Jan Rembowski and the young boy Syga would not trade this adventure for any treasures in the world; furthermore – they are preparing for new trips into the depths of the little world, deep inside a drop of water, in order to examine the life and laws of this little cosmos. And they do so unafraid, despite the dramatic and even tragic dangers and experiences that nature, who guards her secrets jealously, has left in their path.[5]

Micrology: Theory of Oversights

> Orpheus can do anything except look this "point" in the face, look at the centre of the night in the night.
>
> M. Blanchot[6]

In 2001, at the dawn of the new millennium, Aleksander Nawarecki organized a conference on micrology at Silesian University, and subsequently began preparing the release of a three-volume series entitled *Miniatura i mikrologia literacka* (Literary Miniatures and Micrology);[7] in 2005 he published a recapitulation in book form, *Skala mikro w badaniach literackich* (Microscale in Literary Studies).[8] There I encountered, for the first time, the concept of "micropoetics" articulated with breathtaking clarity, in one of the prefaces, where Narawecki writes:

> I would not want to erroneously suggest that studies of literary phenomena in the categories of "mini" and "micro" were born in Silesia at the beginning of the third millennium, since they in fact fall within a tendency that has been active in the humanities for a half century now. We have simply tried to integrate Gaston Bachelard's "microcriticism," Jean-Pierre Richard's "microreading," Jakobson's "microscopy" and Barthes' theory of *punctum* with some other concepts of micropoetics or microscopic phenomenology, found at the border of literary criticism and philosophy – in the writings of Walter Benjamin, Theodor Adorno, Jacques Derrida, Jean-François Lyotard.[9]

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[5] Ibid., p. 3.

[6] M. Blanchot, *The Gaze of Orpheus*, trans. Lydia Davis, ed. P. Adams Sitney, New York 1981, p. 99.

[7] *Miniatura i mikrologia literacka*, ed. A. Nawarecki, vol. 1 (2000), vol. 2 (2001), vol. 3 (2003) – referred to heretofore as MiM with designated page numbers.

[8] *Skala mikro w badaniach literackich*, ed. A. Nawarecki, Katowice 2005.

[9] A. Nawarecki, *Mały Mickiewicz. Studia mikrologiczne* (Little Mickiewicz. Micrological Studies), Katowice 2003, p. 11.

Around the same time we saw the publication of the first editions of Ewa Domańska's *Mikrohistorie* (Microhistories, 1999),[10] Przemysław Czapliński's "micrological" studies (*Mikrologi ze śmiercią*, Micrologues with Death, 2001)[11] and Piotr Michałowski's *Miniatura poetycka* (Poetic Miniature, 1999),[12] and in the Polish context everything came under the sign of Jolanta Brach-Czajna's *Szczeliny istnienia* (The Cracks of Existence, 1992),[13] an academic-essayistic reflection on trivial things, scraps, objects and activities that can grow to the proportions of existential precipices (the cracks of the title).

We can thus talk in terms of a certain kind of fashion that hit around the turn of the new millenium.[14] In the pages of her *Mikrohistorie*, Domańska diagnosed academic history and related branches' slow departure from the post-structuralist paradigm, directing readers toward the essays of Carlo Ginzburg and Giovanni Levi:

> The "new" history, defined by me as "alternative history," has proposed other approaches (different from the traditional modernist one) to the past and a different panorama of that past. It tells of the human being who was "thrown into" the world, of human existence in the world, of the human experience of the world and of the forms of that experience. It is thus a history of experience, a history of feelings, of private microworlds. We get to know the human being and his fates by means of cases, "miniatures," anthropological stories which allows us to probe the texture of everyday reality.[15]

At that time, two different intuitions simultaneously led Domańska toward the "micro" perspective: an inherently existentialist, highly sensitized narrative of "being in the world," and an anthropological exploration, mediated through the tradition of *Altagsgeschichte* (the German school of the history of everyday life) of "private microworlds."

At the same time, Roch Sulima was heading in the direction of a reflexive anthropology, one that underscored the importance of the examining subject and his socially situated position; his *Antropologia codzienności* (An Anthropology of Everyday Life, 2002) was also devoted to a micrological perspective: the minor activities and signs that fill up our space, the oversights of the everyday. The change in the object of study brought with it changes in the way of writing: a concentration on the miniature, an emphasis on the role of notes and sketches, a kind of *work-in-progress*, accenting the randomness of gazes, the privacy of perspective and, at times, a certain symptomatic quality of shared fate. Time after time, however, Sulima turned toward literature, citing Michał Głowiński, Miron Białoszewski, or the "worn down" poems of Julian Przyboś, turned his own narrative into a metaphor, problematized it in terms of style or the possibility of proof, in order to attain the genre ideal of a "little story," analogous to a "little conquest":

[10]E. Domańska, *Mikrohistorie. Spotkania w międzyświatach* (Microhistories. Meetings in the Interworlds), Poznań 2005 (I quote the updated and expanded second edition, Poznań 2005).

[11]P. Czapliński, *Mikrologi ze śmiercią. Motywy tanatyczne we współczesnej literaturze polskiej* (Micrologues with Death. Thanatic Motifs in Contemporary Polish Literature), Poznań 2001.

[12]P. Michałowski, *Miniatura Poetycka* (Poetic Miniature), Szczecin 1999.

[13]J. Brach–Czajna, *Szczeliny istnienia*, Warszawa 1992.

[14]Ewelina Szułek further pursues this topic as well as addressing the potential "innovation" of the Silesian micrological method: "Moda na małe? Innowacyjność śląskiej mikrologii literackiej" (A Fashion for the Small? The Innovation of Silesian Literary Micrology), *Postscriptum Polonistyczne* 2016, no. 1 (17), pp 179–191.

[15]Domańska, *Mikrohistorie*, p. 63.

The anthropologist of everyday life does not have to conquer in order to make his report, as did, for example, Cortez, that is, to act as if the only purpose of conquest were to write a report. [...]. The anthropologist of everyday life makes "little conquests" and reports on them not so much to Your Highnesses as to himself. [...] The reports tell about the world rather than classifying it. What rules by means of these tales, in guaranteeing a cohesion of ordinary experience, is the logic of things and events "for us" rather than a logic of concepts.[16]

Nawarecki's "black micrology,"[17] created based on the idea of a bow toward Jacques Derrida's "white mythology," referring us simultaneously to the problem of the mortality of beings and the fragility of things, thus appeared at a curious moment in the development of our humanities, where at the borderline between deconstructionism, already employed in interpretative practice, and the free exploitation of elements from what is often broadly called "French theory,"[18] but before the "cultural turn" that arrived through the mediation of its promotion and dissemination by Kraków scholar Ryszard Nycz and the KTL circle.[19] There was still a proposal for classical philology after the linguistic and post-structural turn, with important elements of close reading, but it already had perceived the tendency to move away from literary texts toward cultural phenomena, from meaning and its adventures toward various other forms of experiencing literature, readership or personal engagement in the topic of study.

Half of Nawarecki's programmatic postulates thus sound like a tribute to postmodernist textualisms, with the twilight of grand narratives and the Derridean différance in the lead, while the other half sound like a search for other, extratextual paths in the domain of reflexive anthropology and, particularly, the sociology of everyday life. "I treat micrology as [...] a home-grown equivalent to or private version of deconstruction, whose purpose is questioning or 'loosening' the dichotomy: great-small," asserts the Silesian scholar in *Mały Mickiewicz*,[20] "[b]ecause micrology does not seek to replace greatness with smallness, but rather deconstructs that opposition."[21]

Micrology itself is invoked with reference to Lyotard, who, having made a thorough study of avant-garde tendencies toward minimalism, weighed it down with the burden of sublimity and residual responsibility for filling in the gaps in the great Enlightenment project of reason. "Micrology," Lyotard wrote, "is not just metaphysics in crumbs [...]. Micrology inscribes the occurrence of a thought as the unthought that remains to be thought in the 'decline' of great philosophical thought."[22] Micrology is here thus not so much a method as a duty, a task to be

[16]R. Sulima, *Antropologia codzienności*, Kraków 2000, pp. 8–9.

[17]A. Nawarecki, "Czarna mikrologia" (Black Micrology), in: *Skala mikro...*, pp. 9–24.

[18]See E. Domańska, M. Loba, *Introduction to French Theory w Polsce* (French Theory in Poland), ed. E. Domańska, M. Loba, Poznań 2010, pp. 7–20.

[19]The first edition of *Kulturowa teoria literatury. Główne pojęcia i problemy* (Cultural Theory of Literature. Main Concepts and Problems) was only released in 2006; Nycz's "founding" text itself, *Kulturowa natura, słaby profesjonalizm. Kilka uwag o przedmiocie poznania literackiego i statusie dyskursu literaturoznawczego* (Cultural Nature, Weak Professionalism. A Few Notes on the Object of Literary Knowledge and the Status of Literary Studies Discourse) was not published until the release of the book Sporne i bezsporne problemy współczesnej wiedzy o literaturze (Disputed and Undisputed Problems of Contemporary Knowledge on Literature), ed. W. Bolecki and R. Nycz, Warszawa 2002.

[20]Nawarecki, *Mały Mickiewicz*, p. 11.

[21]Nawarecki, *Mały Mickiewicz*, p. 14.

[22]F. Lyotard, "The Sublime and the Avant-garde," translator uncredited, *Paragraph*, Vol. 6 (October 1985), p. 15.

carried out and a summons to think that which hitherto had no place in modern discussions (Nawarecki himself repeatedly asserts that it is certainly no methodology but rather a "dimension of thought," a "perspective," a "formulation"[23]).

This road leads through Theodor W. Adorno and Walter Benjamin all the way back to the German Romantics, to Schlegel, Novalis and Franz Schubert. The poetics of the fragment bears witness to the fragility of existence, the love for collecting small objects, a kind of passion for knick-knacks, it pays tribute to the Angel of History, saving the crumbs that settle, the material traces left by operations of the human spirit (that was in fact the accent of Nawarecki's first "micrological" work, on the imagination and objects of the Skamander poets[24]). A minor change of perspective in the foreword to the final volume of Mikrologie from 2005 pushes this venerable procession of authoritative masters into the shadows, however, and the essay concentrates, exactly like Sulima's, on the scholar himself, on the microfiber washcloth he is holding, on the order of everyday life, and forces us to ask the question "What kind of washcloth is that?"[25] This is no longer a space of reflection on literature, but an exercise in the anthropology of small things, "small stories," at the intersection of texts and cultural practices.

A similar rupture can likewise be seen in a work cited by Nawarecki, Przemysław Czapliński's *Mikrologi ze śmiercią*. And we see such a rupture heralded by the fabricated, encyclopedic definition of the word "micrologist" on the book's back cover, an homage to scientific scrupulosity and truly Enlightenment objectivity, that in subsequent developments will commit a creative betrayal and stick to "a reading based on the particles of the text," which "involves entering the cracks in the work, engaging in readerly bustle, incessant circulation from grand narratives to small ones."[26] That is not only a methodological proposition, defining a way of reading and interpreting that turns out to contradict twentieth- century ideals of scholarship; it is a particular egalitarian and nonviolent philosophy of being and simultaneously a theoretical conceptualization of unbinding but nevertheless cognitively productive activities whose space remains everyday life, and whose basic technique is pragmatic assimilation.

If we look closely at the texts of the other scholars whose work is collected in Nawarecki's books of micrology, the motivations for their individual studies or their informal methodology (for what is crucial at the moment is not the theoretical undersoil or professed "school" of interpretation), then micrology itself will also appear to us as internally contradictory. On the one hand, we may observe such positively valued characteristics as a scholar's precision and scrupulosity, a reader's careful attention, faithfulness to the text and steadfast adherence to it (in defiance of philosophical and cultural tendencies toward "use" of the text27), repeated re-reading, concentration on alterations and details. Particularly outstanding, in terms of

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[23]A. Nawarecki, *Introduction*, MiM, vol. 2, p. 9.

[24]Nawarecki, *Rzeczy i marzenia. Studia o wyobraźni poetyckiej Skamandrytów* (Things and Dreams. Studies in the Poetic Imagination of the Skamander Poets), Katowice 1993.

[25]Tenże, *Introduction*, MiM, vol. 2, p. 22.

[26]Czapliński, p. 10.

[27]Tomasz Kunz wrote recently on the cultural transformation of poetics and the related marginalization of literature: "Poetyka w świetle kulturoznawstwa" (Poetics in the Light of Cultural Studies), *Forum Poetyki* 2015, no. 1.

these considerations, is the powerfully analytical Paweł Jędrzejko, who rewrites Gadamer's hermeneutics as a variant of *close reading*, and looks to find in "micrology" not only an instrument of research, but also an ideal hermeneutic intermediary between the work's past and the reader's present:

> the focus of micrology's interests will be the microstructures of literary works, which, however, need not (though they can) be understood as systemic elements of a work's macrostructure. In this sense, micrology becomes synonymous with micropoetics: it is thus a discipline that borders on descriptive and historical poetics, that is, a tool that can have applications in studies in immanent, normative, or generative poetics, or in confrontations of formulated poetics with immanent poetics.[28]

In proposing his "peculiar 'ant's eye view' methodology,"[29] Jędrzejko, a discerning reader and student of Melville's work, perceives micrology / micropoetics as the answer to the fatigue that has resulted from the post-structuralist deliquescence. According to this view, micrology "was called into being by the disaccord between existence and discourse; joining, via emotion, the existential vitality of the detail and its semiotic function, micrology performs a bona fide interpretation, based on the philological commitment to 'learning the language' of the work and the period."[30]

In the context of the many texts collected in the several volumes of *Micrologies*, Jędrzejko nevertheless presents an extreme analytical position. Practices that are vastly different from each other and relate to distinct constructions of the scholarly subject are treated as equivalent: bustlement, collecting, circulation (drift), "carping" and "nearsightedness" (Nawarecki), an emotional attitude toward the object, a fondness for the trifle that leads us in the direction of crumbs, particles, shreds, and remnants, and finally: the anarchic remainder. The contemporary self is thus unsure of its own cognitive possibilities, "weak" in Vattimo's terms, disinclined to create syntheses, devoting more attention to those like itself, i.e., the impotent, absent or imperceptible, undermining its own rationality. Nawarecki asks the same, only seemingly rhetorical question that in the past was asked by a Saussure and Jakobson in their studies of anagrammatic structures:

> Is not this manneristic minuteness, blind pedantry, obsession with trifles not the eternal disease of born scholars of literature? Minuteness that seems childish or sclerotically senile is the style of reading, after all, as inquisitive as it is light-hearted, that Barthes holds up as a model.[31]

Where the first of the tendencies described is associated with the discovery of the microscope, on which rests the promise of discovering the foundations of reality still rests, and the micrologist, scholar of particles, the executor of Jakobsonian precision and strategies of "microscopy,"[32] remains the subject, the second is identified with the imagined figure of the

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[28]P. Jędrzejko, *Oscylacje literackie, czyli od Gadamera do mikrologicznej krytyki* świadomości (Literary Oscillations, or From Gadamer to a Micrological Critique of Consciousness), MiM, vol. 2, p. 29.

[29]Ibid.

[30]Ibid., p. 56.

[31]A. Nawarecki, "Mikrologia, genologia, miniatura" (Micrology, Study of Genres, Miniature), *MiM*, vol. 1, pp. 16–17.

[32]See the very interesting text on Jakobson's "microscopy," juxtaposing two different analyses of a Baudelaire poem by Jakobson, five years apart: B. Mytych, "Mikroskopia Romana Jakobsona" (Roman Jakobson's Microscopy), *MiM*, vol. 2, pp. 19–26.

micronaut, the shrinking man, who with Vernean fervour explores a dangerous and unknown world, even if only in the form of a prosthetic eye, as in the *Podróże mikrokosmiczne profesora Rembowskiego*. In what follows, I will be interested in precisely this figure of the micronaut, exposed to the greatest danger of all, what his own sense of sight has become.

Micronautics: (in)sight

> Since we've all insisted on being dumbfounded, I have
> been sent to manifest that to the nation.
>
> Konrad Góra, Wrocław[33]

This is how Konrad Góra's epic poem or oratorio, *Nie* (Them), begins:

> 1
>
> Drzewo – ślad. Roślinny złom.
> Wstyd o brak drzazgi. Jeszcze
>
> 1
>
> Nikt nie oślepł od
> odwracania wzroku [...][34]
>
> (A tree – a trace. Vegetable salvage. / Shame at the lack of splinters. Still / None have gone blind from / turning their sight [...].)

The work deals as much with looking or seeing itself, the constant topic of this Wrocław poet's work, as with death and emptiness, and the irreducible singularity of the victims of the Rana Plaza disaster in Bangladesh (24 April 2013), which was the result of faulty construction and the unrestrained capitalist desire for accumulation through the exploitation of resources, whether spatial, material or human. In telling of the inexplicable nature of death, of the "little death" of everyday life, Góra approaches Czapliński's idea of "micrologues," of which the latter wrote:

> separation here has the upper hand over summary – because the object of interest consisted of individual truths about death, private micrologies of dying. In order to read the currents of these micrologies, to find the threads of convention and suffering, grammar and pain, it was necessary – in some measure symmetrically in terms of the writer's efforts – to repeat their words in one's own words, to renew the attempt to tear the fabric of language, unavoidable in expressing individual truth, and the attempt to newly patch it together, necessary for the utterance of truth in a comprehensible form.[35]

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[33]K. Góra, "Wrocław," in: *Requiem dla Saddama Husajna i inne wiersze dla ubogich duchem* (Requiem for Saddam Hussein and other Poems for the Poor in Spirit), Wrocław 2008, p. 7.

[34]K. Góra, *Nie*, Wrocław 2016, p. 9; heretofore designated in the text as "N" followed by the page number; where necessary, I omit verse or line divisions, numeration, and other compositional elements of the original in my quotations from it, focusing solely on the production of meanings.

[35]Czapliński, *Mikrologi*, p. 9.

Góra's epic poem is bottomless and total, but it also preserves a micropoetic, micrological structure: each distich is capable of functioning independently, each is a singularity, each produces an untranslatable idiom and finally gives the reader the last word. We enter our reading in a group of several persons, in some kind of apparent community ("bra-/ cie" [bro-/ther(s), "sio-/ stro" [sis-/ter!)]), only to reach, after over eleven hundred distichs, a final one which is incomplete and perhaps cut-off. "The final line of the final distich is designed to be written by the reader," Góra informs us in the afterword, entitled "An Attempt at Clarification" (Próba wyjaśnienia) [N, 138], though it invokes a kind of Norwidesque breath rather than any rule of writing: a place of silence, air, void.

But this is not the only feature that prompts us to group *Nie* among "micrologues" in the Czaplińskian sense and the "micrologies" proposed by Nawarecki. References to attempts "to tear the fabric of language" and sew it together again are intrinsically references to the technical side of the poem, because they describe the principle of creation of particular structures, with strong enjambment, including even examples within a single word, with a seeming absence of coordinated conjunctivity of elements and with a nearly total lack of any kind of predicate that would help create a narrative of some sort. For the Nie do not constitute a narrative (I refer to the title using the plural pronoun, as the author stipulates in his Attempt at Clarification), but rather a fabric, a gobelin tapestry, which is ruled by the surface (Deleuze rears his head again) logic of stitching and unstitching, and thus also covering up and stripping bare, sealing and unsealing (the wound), silence and utterance, macrosystem and microexistence, the order of numbers and the order of idiomatic existence, monument and scrap/crumb. That is why I cite Góra's poem in an essay on micropoetics, surrounded by the theories and methods of: Nawarecki, Foucault, Deleuze; I cite the poem as its creator intended, as an oratorio, and thus a task to be carried out, but also a means itself of practicing micropoetics and the microgaze, which most interests me within that discipline. At the same time, this is my third attempt, within a fairly short scope of time, to write about *Nie*, as if each time a different, separate fragment were operative, and the "economy of remainder" were again setting increasingly microscopic fragments into vibration.

In the introductory part of this work I described the story of Syga and Professor Rembowski (to some extent by analogy to the fable that opens *Nie*, about a "mouse, our faithful comrade," which also provides procedural instructions for coping with trauma), moved by that "permanent loss of sharpness of vision in one eye." In fact, my reading of Unkiewicz was accompanied by a passage in *Nie*, which could certainly be interpreted in terms of mysticism or post-secular seeking; I, however, think of it in categories of desire, microactivities and their connections with the macrophysics of power: "Patrzeć / ciemności. Ubyć" [To look / darkness. To subside; N, 34].

I thus feel obligated to ask a question not yet posed either by Nawarecki or by any of the texts compiled in the "micrological" volumes: what dangers are concealed within micrology? Who might it hurt, puncture, or shatter? Does it really enable us to look "deeper," and what are the consequences of that? Who is the master and who is the victim of micrology thus understood? And where does the "literary microscope" itself stand in regard to modernity, with its panoptic nature, or spectacular postmodernity? I am thus interested in a tender and provocative, dangerous micrology, while at the level of genre study I am drawn to its micropo-

etic equivalent, the linguistic experiment with the forms of life, which should, in spite of all, be called biopolitical.[36] This problem, in its turn, forces us to come to terms with two patron saints who appear only casually in the volumes edited by Nawarecki: Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze.[37]

Microphysics: the Division of Power (Over the Body)

Despite the anthropological and sociological deviations toward cultural studies, micropractices, or what Kathleen Stewart has aptly called cultural *poiesis*,[38] the promise of micrology from Nawarecki's volumes still remains hermeneutic and therefore exegetic: turning our gaze toward what is smallest and conducting our reading in the most careful and scrupulous way, we straightaway posit the possibility of a structural analogy, a passage fraught with meanings from detail to whole, from the insignificant particular to a totalizing synthesis, which will take place at higher levels of meaning or at successive levels of semiosis (we thus find ourselves following in the footsteps of Barthes's *Mythologies* or Eco's "semiotics of everyday life", no matter what). Even the idea of the "remainder," of that which slips away, which endures in defiance of the scholar's discourse or outside it, acquires enhanced value in this perspective, and the real proportions of forces undergo effacement.

To sum up a certain stage in our reflections, we can thus propose three separate approaches to literary "micrology." With reference to its character of being a "remainder" and to its penchant for the poetics of the fragment, we can perceive micrology as a kind of "defence of defencelessness," by which what is seemingly condemned to failure and oblivion becomes stabilized, preserved, acquires meaning, i.e., hope.[39] It then continues, in spite of all, the hermeneutic idea of the exegsis of the sacred text, even if the text itself – as in, to name one source, Bruno Schulz's *Księga* (Book) – we find to be a newspaper, calendar or matchbox.

[36]Even if only in such a variant of it as "biopoetics" in Przemysław Czapliński's understanding of that term in "Resztki nowoczesności" (Remains of Modernity), in *Resztki nowoczesności. Dwa studia o literaturze i życiu* (Remains of Modernity. Two Studies of Literature and Life), Kraków 2011, pp. 271–294.

[37]My analysis leads me to believe that throughout the four volumes of Miniatura i mikrologia literacka Deleuze and Foucault appear sporadically and on the basis of false premises or associations, not actually related to microperspectives. In the first volume, Deleuze, together with Guattari, is mentioned in the opening essay by Nawarecki in a parade of names, as a continuator (sic) of the Marxist path and heir to the Frankfurt School. In the second and fourth volumes, he returns completely at random, as a representative of thinking in terms of opposites in the deconstructionist tradition (and the author of Différence et Répétition), while in the third he appears only marginally, as a commentator on the thought of Bergson. Foucault fares no better: in the first volume he barely represents a voice responding to Barthes's "death of the author," in the second he appears in a cycle of deliberations, but nobody devotes a whole essay to him, as other entries are devoted to Jakobson, Bachelard and Barthes, and from the third and fourth volumes he is entirely absent, as if the historical and discursive "microphysics of power" were not important for literary micrology. As can be seen from the above enumeration, micrology has certain lacunae in need of remedy, at which the present essay can represent a first attempt.

[38]K. Stewart, "Cultural Poiesis: The Generativity of Emergent Things," in *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 3rd Edition, ed. N. Denzin, Y. Lincoln, Thousand Oaks: Sage, pp. 1015–1030.

[39]This residual gleam of hope, a truly Benjaminian inclination, can be perceived even in such a melancholic and pessimistic diagnosis as we find in Sulima's book: "The undulating inflow or outflow of things tears the thread of tradition [...]. Reports show, in the perspective of individual experience, not so much 'how it is,' how something lasts, but rather how something 'vanished' or 'vanishes.' Thus inscribed into these reports are sequences of 'historicity' which help to understand perhaps not so much the present as it 'passes' as rather the 'oncoming' present" (Sulima, p. 9). Nawarecki devotes a separate footnote to this category, joining theology to the "economy of remainders" (see Nawarecki, *Mikrologia...*, MiM, vol. 1, p. 21).

It is also possible to look at micrology (and thus also every form of micropoetics) in terms of the search for validation for the humanities. In a paradigm dominated by the natural sciences, studies at the micro scale often seem more attractive than those conducted at the macro scale. They offer more certain results, deceive with the promise of direct reference to reality, are less speculative, and therefore less susceptible to error. If humanists' perception of the humanities in laboratory categories has become a symptomatic tendency,[40] we remain still in the age of the optical microscope rather than that of the Large Hadron Collider.

But it is also possible, and this approach seems more promising, to follow Lyotard and propose to see micrology as a consequence of the collapse of the grand narratives, an effect of disenchantment with twentieth century gigantomachy, the claims of Theory to omniscience and definitive judgments. Micrology would then be not so much the promise of a more penetrating and more precise reading (a variant of usurping close reading) as rather an extension – in methodological space – of a tendency issuing from the capitulation of Enlightenment reason, the tendency to write summaries, fragments, notebooks, to exhibit the practical dimension of research and shift the weight onto personal histories and case studies, toward idiomatic, reflective anthropology.

It is here that the real field of study for micropoetics finally begins, and for what it might be: not the study of textual particles, gnomes and epigrams, not a search for "cracks in existence" in nonliterary works, in slogans on walls, tombstones, advertisements and instructional manuals,[41] but a specific, situated and self-conscious tactic of operation, aimed at various forms of authority, in other words: the poetics of life in its political dimension.

If we look for the foundations of this combination, we must naturally turn in the direction of Michel Foucault and his "microphysics of power."[42] In seeking to test the fundamental sources of oppression and the forces that shape the subject at the social level, Foucault had to perform a meticulous analysis of old discourses and find in them the traces of shifts between practice and command or norm. He thus tied his microanalysis into a double loop by showing 1) how far into the depths, to life as manifested at its base (even to biological and biopolitical questions), the structuring/parcelling/coercive/sub-you-gating power of the authorities reaches, and 2) to what degree basic actions of individual subjects are capable of slipping out of its grasp or deforming it. After many years of searching for engagement at various levels of discourse, Foucault's final choice turned out to be ethical-aesthetic "care of the self," understood as a kind of aesthetics of existence.

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[40] See Nycz, "W stronę innowacyjnej humanistyki polonistycznej: tekst jako laboratorium. Tradycje, hipotezy, propozycje" (Toward an Innovative Polish Studies Humanities: The Text as Laboratory. Traditions, Hypotheses, Propositions), *Teksty Drugie* 2013, nos. 1–2; A. Żychliński, *Laboratorium antropofikcji. Dociekania filologiczne* (The Laboratory of Anthropofiction. Philosophical Inquiries), Poznań/Warszawa 2014; Ł. Afeltowicz, *Laboratoria w działaniu: innowacja technologiczna w świetle antropologii nauki* (Laboratoria in Action: Technological Innovation in the Light of the Anthropology of Science), Warszawa 2011; Afeltowicz, *Modele, artefakty, kolektywy: praktyka badawcza w perspektywie współczesnych studiów nad nauką* (Models, Artefacts, Collectives: Scholarly Practice in the Perspective of Contemporary Studies of Science), Toruń 2012.

[41] One might ponder the application of micropoetics as a method of reading micropoetries, which, adhering to the The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics, we define as accidental, peripheral literary forms, created by amateurs, rather a kind of ephemeral cultural practice than a work or artefact, and to a great extent dependent on social context and the temporary mode of functioning of a given community. See M. Damon, *Postliterary America: From Bagel Shop Jazz to Micropoetries*, Iowa City: University of Iowa Press 2011.

[42] See B. Banasiak, "Michel Foucault – Mikrofizyka władzy" (Michel Foucault – Microphysics of Power), *Literatura na Świecie* (World Literature) 1988, no. 6 (203).

The "aesthetics of existence" itself that Foucault proposed as a solution to the problem of the responsibility of "I" for "we" (the plane of reference for the individual here remains always the agora) does not really translate into theory, understood as a "box of tools," in this case used for "opening" literary texts. But that is the interpretation of his work on which Foucault insisted in his dialogue with Deleuze, who proposed this capacious and still current metaphor for the relationship between theory and practice: "A theory is exactly like a box of tools. It has nothing to do with the signifier. It must be useful. It must function."[43]

That is not what constitutes one of Foucault's greatest achievements, nor even is the introduction of the micrological perspective into the study of power relations, but rather the reversal of influence. If we look at the *History of Madness or Discipline and Punish*, we perceive that it is not discourse (judicial, penitentiary, medical) that shapes the foundations of desire, sub-you-gates subjects and establishes social reality, but a series of accidental, chaotic, situated practices, inventions, and grassroots procedures which from the beginning have eluded cataloguing. In this sense, the microtechnology of the authorities outdistances ideology and discourse itself, acting independently and in some sense automatically. Series of technological embodiments, rhythmically practiced activities and concretely shared spaces preserve institutions within themselves and only lastly "become visible" to the discourse in whose study Foucault is engaged.

If we thus look at the French philosopher's achievement, perceiving the subject not as the result of social "processing" by the discourses of power, but as an active actor, whose drive sphere, desires and basic impulses always slip free of structurization, or in other words: if we treat as the end point of Foucault's writings not *History of Madness but The Care of the Self*, his "aesthetic of existence" turns out to be a micropoetics of dodges, tricks and slippages enabling the defence of the self. In this aspect of Foucault interpretation, the thinker most indebted to him was Michel de Certeau, when he formulated the "poetics of everyday life," that is, when he designated the frameworks of sociological and anthropological reflection on the forms of everyday life according to a tool from the field of the theory of poetic language.

> It remains to be asked how we should consider other, equally infinitesimal, procedures, which have not been "privileged" by history but are nevertheless active in innumerable ways in the openings of established technological networks. This is particularly the case of procedures that do not enjoy the precondition, associated with all those studied by Foucault, of having their own place (un lieu propre) on which the panoptic machinery can operate. These techniques, which are also operational, but initially deprived of what gives the others their force, are the "tactics" which I have suggested might furnish a formal index of the ordinary practices of consumption.[44]

It is not my purpose, however, to describe the "poetics" of the un-localized subversive activities that de Certeau calls "tactics," and among which he includes cooking, reading, walking,

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[43]In the same conversation Deleuze, in a manner typical for his philosophy, presents practice as "a set of relays from one theoretical point to another," and theory as "a relay from one practice to another," on which point Foucault, a scholar of an entirely dissimilar temperament, seems to agree enthusiastically (M. Foucault, G. Deleuze, "Intellectuals and power: A conversation between Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze," lib.org, https://libcom.org/library/intellectuals-power-a-conversation-between-michel-foucault-and-gilles-deleuze [accessed 6 May. 2017]).

[44]M. de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall, Berkeley 1984, p. 49.

various forms of translocation or mobility. It seems to me that for some time, at least since the publication of the first volume of the Polish translation of *The Practice of Everyday Life* in 2008, this knowledge has been assimilated and applied by practically everyone in the humanities in Poland. What I have in mind is rather to convey an impulse that can be traced to Foucault: the fundamental meaning of microorganization and from-below activities, as opposed to the macrostructures of institutions. The needs of the authorities of structural division begin to be met by other types of connectivity, and delocalized activities of evasion or escape, deprived of a place in discourse, which constitute the very material of everyday life, they recall the Deleuzian concept of deterritorialization and have more in common with the economy of desire than might appear from de Certeau's sociological reading.

The is not about de Certeau or even Foucault, but about a possible way of acting or desiring that does not allow itself finally to be subordinated, and which is, in fact, a micropoetics: of steps, breaths, rhythms of the bodies opposed to the rhythms of machines cut up and reorganized in Góra's poem as an asyndeton. A similar movement of microsegmentation was observed by Roland Barthes, when he enjoined a reading that "grasps at every point in the text the asyndeton which cuts the various languages";[45] de Certeau, too, observes it, when he writes of the poetics of walking, in which "[a]syndeton, by elision, creates a 'less,' opens gaps in the spatial continuum, and retains only selected parts of it," "disconnects them by eliminating the conjunctive or the consecutive (nothing in place of something)," "cuts out: it undoes continuity and undercuts its plausibility," transforming the space so treated "into enlarged singularities and separate islands."[46]

What would be the purpose of such transformations in Góra? How do they change our perception? The real space of catastrophe seems with every moment to shrink and seal up, while on the other hand the cartography of divisions and boundaries running athwart bodies expands. Ruins in the material sense yield to what we might call phantasmatic ruins: the image of fragments that do not fit together, a trash heap of remnants that retain the memory of basic functions and practices, old divisions and aims, determined within the capitalist regime of production. To bear witness, Góra seems to tell us, is to look at this chaos without the possibility of synthesis. Yet the obtrusiveness of the agronomist, the top-down mechanism of surveying,[47] the phantom of law continues to function: "Patrzeć, // jak druzgocony młyn / pokazuje omłot: // grodzić. Wyznaczać." [To look / at how the shattered mill shows the threshing: / fence off. Demarcate; N, 77], "Mierzenie okuć. / Spójny szept w // duszącej technice. / Szablon i fetysz. // Opatrzenie wejścia, // dary wydarte śnieniu" [Measurement of fixtures. / A coherent whisper in / stifling technology. / Template and fetish. / Patching up the entrance, / gifts ripped out from dreaming; N, 46], "Zagoiło się / niebo za niepatrzenia. // Róg, obręb (3,8 x / 2,7 kuchnia). // Obsesje norm. / – Ubierz się. // – śmiech. Objęcie / chlebem (5,4 x 2,7 // pokój), ziemniaki i / sorgo" [The healed / sky beyond notlooking.

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[45]R. Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*, trans. Richard Howard, New York 1975, p. 12.

[46]de Certeau, The Practice of Everyday Life, p. 101.

[47]Giorgio Agamben writes, in the context of probably the most famous literary surveyor, the hero of Kafka's Castle: "In civil law, just as in public law, the possibility of scertaining territorial boundaries, of locating and assigning portions of land (ager), and finally, of arbitrating border disputes influenced the very practice of law. For this reason, insofar as he was a finitor par excellence – he who ascertains, establishes, and determines boundaries – the land surveyor was also called iuris auctor, "creator of law," and he held the title vir perfectissimus" (G. Agamben, "K.," [in:] Nudities, trans. David Kishik and Stefan Pedatella, Stanford 2011, p. 31.

/ The horn, the hem (3.8 x 2.7 kitchen), / Obsession with norms. / "Get dressed." / laughter. Embrace / by bread (5.4 x 2.7 / room), potatoes and / sorghum; N 42-43]. These attempts are given the lie, however, by the inexplicability of death, the perspective of darkness (the failure of the gaze) and earth (spatial infinity), this "Patrzeć / ciemności. Ubyć" (To look /darkness. Subside). "The ruin does not appear before us," Jacques Derrida wrote. "It is neither spectacle nor love object. It is experience itself [...] rather this memory open like an eye or an eye-socket enabling sight without showing anything."[48] These words were commented on by Jakub Momro, with reference to Marchel Duchamp's *Étant donnés*, as an example of the "strategy of ruination":

> we are no longer dealing with a demonstration or presentation, nor even with their destruction, but with the dialectical relationship between destruction and construction, between the matter of the thing, from which the seeing subject is divided, and the line of the gaze resting, helplessly, on what has been imposed on it by means of violence.[49]

The asyndeton of Góra's poem reproduces that fundamental tension, but reshapes it into the form of a political protest.

Micropolitics: Freed Molecules

Whereas Foucault ceded the power of action to the individual subject, entrusting him with the task of caring for the self, with the consciousness of participation in a collective social mechanism and the possibility of microinfluencing concrete processes, at around the same time Deleuze proposed schizoanalysis as a "micropolitical theory of desire," aware that it was simultaneously the only possibility for real political resistance within the absorptive, but unceasingly leaky capitalist system.

Within his machinism, he thus described a basic division into molar and molecular spheres, identifying molar ties (stable and comprehensive) with the oppressive order of the Institution and molecular with the revolutionary, creative order (desire here is free, not located in any intentional regime assigned from above, and thus does not reproduce its structures and ways of operating). The molecule – to simplify greatly – becomes something like a free electron, capable of joining together with different atoms not for the purpose of reproducing a pattern, but in order to carry out generative transformations and continually escape or (in Deleuzian terms) deterritorialize macropolitical segments.

> It is true that the flow and its quanta can be grasped only by virtue of indexes on the segmented line, but conversely, that line and those indexes exist only by virtue of the flow suffusing them. In every case, it is evident that the segmented line (macropolitics) is immersed in and prolonged by quantum flows (micropolitics) that continually reshuffle and stir up its segments.[50]

Machines of desire organized in a molar fashion are thus subordinated to general laws, and constitute only elements that duplicate a model with a clear and precise purpose (they are

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[48]J. Derrida, Mémories d'aveugle, Paris 1999. Quoted in: Momro, Widmontologie..., p. 17.
[49]Ibid.
[50]G. Deleuze, F. Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus, trans. Brian Massumi*, London 1987, p. 218.

teleological), namely, the reproduction of that same pattern. Molecular machines act for themselves, and into their action are inscribed waste, error, movement and rupture. On the plane of the classical tools of poetics, the closest to Deleuze were the orders of collage and Burroughsian cutups, as well as surrealistic chance, and thus figures of juxtaposition and ellipsis. Presenting practices of reading in *Anti-Oedipus* as "a montage of desiring-machines, a schizoid exercise that extracts from the text its revolutionary force,"[51] and thus unblocking the flow of desires, Deleuze of course takes the side of molecular organization, but also stands against the great Freudian and Lacanian traditions that can be perceived as variants of classical hermeneutics (in the sense that they are exercises in decipherment, final close reading). Instead of looking for the signifier or signified, Deleuze chooses to "set them on each other" in an energetic, creative struggle which is an intensification of flow, a survey of cuts and ties (form and substance) and their mutual interrelation ("the molecular flux of quanta"), and, finally, the creation of a map of transversal lines of resistance. From such cuts and reorganizations of segments there takes shape a micropolitical "war machine."[52]

Deleuze's micrology thus lies at the opposite pole from the microscopy of Jakobson or the micrology of Richard or even Bachelard, which ascribed to the image, even the "elementary particle," a liberating force. It is not concerned chiefly with the meaning of the detail or the attainment of basic, structural "shares" in the work or the text, nor even with scale, as in the original Silesian micrology, but with models of thinking about desire (and thus action): from below and from above, revolutionary and coercive, micro- and macrophysical, models capable of joining individual case studies with a "general theory of everything" (in passing, we must observe that Deleuze's micrology becomes a subversive version of system theory). Only these models are translatable – through organic (molecular) or technical (molar) metaphors of connectivity – into concrete procedures that we might call linguistic or, more precisely, poetological.

It should be remembered, however, that such thinking about machines of desire is not thinking about sizes, but is typically merological: concerned with the relation of the part to the whole.

> The issue is that the molar and the molecular are distinguished not by size, scale, or dimension but by the nature of the system of reference envisioned. Perhaps, then, the words "line" and "segment" should be reserved for molar organization, and other, more suitable, words should be sought for molecular composition.[53]

Molar ties can thus bring together both the order of the Institution and that of the State, block flows of desire, and like molecular ties, they can deterritorialize and thereby set free both groups and individual subjects. The micropolitics proposed by Deleuze, and whose ideal representation we find in his exegesis of *Bartleby the Scrivener*,[54] takes place according to mo-

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[51] G. Deleuze, F. Guattari, *Anti–Oedipus. Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. R Hurley, New York 2004, p. 116.

[52] See G. Deleuze, C. Parnet, "Many Politics," [in:] *Dialogues*, trans. H. Tomlinson, B. Habberjam, Columbia University Press: New York 1987, pp. 124–148.

[53] Deleuze, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 217.

[54] See Deleuze, "Bartleby, or the Formula," trans. Michael W. Greco, *Essays Critical and Clinical*, New York 1998, pp. 68 –91.

lecular principles such as the crack, fissure, the cutting and undulating lines that demarcate it, while its spirit remains betrayal, as a refusal to belong to the majority, as a path of becoming-imperceptible, everybody and nobody simultaneously.

We see in *A Thousand Plateaus* how important for Deleuze are the perspectives of chemistry, physics, and microbiology. He joins together the paradigms of the study of substances, laws of reality and organisms in a truly historiosophical treatise, even while his heart beats in a literary mode (a part of *The Geology of Morals*). This treatise is the story of an insane lecture by Professor Challenger, a fictional character from the work of Conan Doyle, accompanied by equally literary passages from Marcel Griaule's anthropological study *Conversations with Ogotemmêli: an introduction to Dogon religious ideas* (originally published as *Dieu d'eau* [God of Water]), interspersed with quotations from the theory of science and the natural sciences, all crowned with passages from H.P. Lovecraft. By analogy, they confront the decomposition conducted by Challenger with the "dark, cosmic rhythm" of the process of transition from which, in Lovecraft, a menacing reality emerges. The professor disappears at the end of his lecture, becomes deterritorialized, slipping outside the boundaries of the symbolic order and beyond the boundaries of perception:

> Disarticulated, deterritorialized, Challenger muttered that he was taking the earth with him, that he was leaving for the mysterious world, his poison garden. He whispered something else: it is by headlong flight that things progress and signs proliferate. Panic is creation. A young woman cried out, her face "convulsed with a wilder, deeper, and more hideous epilepsy of stark panic than they had seen on human countenance before." No one had heard the summary, and no one tried to keep Challenger from leaving. Challenger, or what remained of him, slowly hurried toward the plane of consistency, following a bizarre trajectory with nothing relative left about it.[55]

Though the story recalls at times a horror film, at other times the story of the loner from Providence, and, on still another level, Nietzsche's Zarathrustra, Challenger's hysterical theses are, in fact, the theses of Deleuze himself, and the treatise on the world's fundamental connections, from the microparticle level to the speed and energy of the universe, despite, or rather because of, the madness inscribed within it, is schizoanalysis in practice. The purpose of the lecture (both the professor's and Deleuze's) is found to be just as much conveying a certain philosophical hypothesis as telling the story of fracturing, withdrawal and abnegation that leads to becoming-imperceptible, the final position of disinheritance from all molar schemata and incorporation into the chaotic flux of the universe.[56] Only literature can simultaneously signalize meanings and show the real action implied by Deleuze's economy of desires; this is because literature is the practice of flow, which is spatial in nature. Here are two mutually complementary remarks by the surveyor:

> To write is certainly not to impose a form (of expression) on the matter of lived experience. Literature rather moves in the direction of the ill-formed or the incomplete, as Gombrowicz said as well

[55]Deleuze, A Thousand Plateaus, p. 73.

[56]On the subject of the "philosophy of abnegation" and its political dimension, see: M. Herer, *"Bartleby and his brothers or the political art of refusal," Dialogue and Universalism, no. 2/2016.*

as practiced. Writing is a question of becoming, always incomplete, always in the midst of being formed, and goes beyond the matter of any livable or lived experience.[57]

All we talk about are multiplicities, lines, strata and segmentarities, lines of flight and intensities, machinic assemblages and their various types, bodies without organs and their construction and selection, the plane of consistency, and in each case the units of measure. [...] Writing has nothing to do with signifying. It has to do with surveying, mapping, even realms that are yet to come.[58]

The question of transcending matter and the draughtsmanship, related to writing, of the cartography of the future are obviously elements of the "war machine," based on the microtensions of analysis of the intensity of desire. I thus return to the idiosyncratic moment: "Patrzeć / ciemności. Ubyć" [N, 36] with a question about the transition – about what is taking place between two actions: looking and being, and what is announced by the beginning of the poem itself:

[...] Pójdziemy do lasu
w cielisty deszcz, mniejsi

1
i wrócę sam, większy
o straconego. O nie.

(We will go to the forest / in a flesh-coloured rain, smaller / and I will return alone, larger / for what I've lost. About them)

[N, 9]

What happened in that forest? Why is the rain "flesh-coloured"? What is the relationship here between the minority and the majority, the multitude of "we" and the solitude of "I"? If this "lost" is precisely the measure of that relationship, the price of the journey, then in what sense does its absence magnify the subject? Does it magnify or rather falsify? To what degree is this process in the nature of "subsiding"? What or who are "they" (or: "no") in the last line? We will not learn that from Góra's poem, because he does not tell about the expedition with brother and sister to the forest; it is not a retelling of Andersen's fairy tale, though it might seem to be at first. Instead, it takes place in the space of the forest, in an expanse demarcated on the one hand by the materiality of a transformed tree (knag, splinter, slaughter), and on the other by the phenomenology of damaged visual perception: "uchylenie okien od wzroku" [turning windows away from sight; N, 61], "wywołany przez pomylenie wzroku negatyw" [a negative produced by faulty sight; N, 116].

I am thus looking for transitions and openings, while keeping in mind that Nie represents a wound in the process of scabbing, that it is governed by "Zatarcie śladu. Sprostowanie prawdy nie o kłamstwo, o milczenie" [the effacement of a trace. Truth's corrective not to a lie, but to

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[57]Deleuze, Essays Critical and Clinical, p. 1.
[58]Deleuze, A Thousand Plateaus, pp. 4–5.

silence; N, 96]. I am looking for linguistic material in the phase of becoming, which leads me to the prefixes "prze-" (pre-: over/before; also trans-: across, through) and "przed-" (pre-: before), which generate whole chains of tensions. The first of these, according to the *PWN Dictionary of Polish Language*, intensifies the meaning of adjectives and endows verbs with a new shade of meaning: spatial, temporal or relational. The second creates compounds which, depending on the context, signify anticipation, antecedence or precedence or can describe the relation of an action to someone. We thus have a whole chain of "Leśmianisms," leading into the past, to a time before matter took its current form: "przedrzeczy" (pre-thing), "przedsen" (pre-sleep / pre-dream), "przedjęzyk" (pre-language), "przedpamięć" (pre-memory). We have everything that signals space and the moments or places of transition I have been looking for: "przepływ" (flow), "przepadek" (forfeiture), "przełyk" (gullet / esophagus), "przepita" (drank), "przeprawa" (passage), "przestój" (standstill), "przeskok" (leap), "przepaść" (precipice, abyss), "przebicie" (perforation, puncture). We have an intensification of the meaning of words, leading to a specific kind of hyperbolization, as if each gesture or form of existence in Nie were displaced in time: "przeoczenie" (oversight), "przemilczenie" (passing over in silence), "przebudzenie" (awakening), "przełamanie" (break), "przemnożenie" (multiplication), "przedłużenie" (extension), "przeciągnięte" (drawn-out), "przerysowane" (exaggerated), "przesycone" ([over]-saturated), "przeznaczone" (destined), "przemyślane" (thought through), "przeżarte" (eaten up), "przecierające" (liquidizing/wearing through). These are just a few examples, and though in the course of reading, the explosive nature of these slippages – of spatial shift or temporal extension – operates more at the level of affect, the juxtaposition as presented above looks more like a dictionary game, as if Góra had selected certain headings and proceeded letter by letter through a bravura stylistic exercise.

The word "przejście" (crossing) itself appears five times, but none of these occurrences (as we might expect) is simply a movement through space, from place to place, a conquest of distance:

> Szczelina, / przejście, zaognienie [Crack, / transition, inflammation; N, 47];
> Sęk. Przejście do / potęgi [Knag. Passage to / power; N, 121];
> Paniczne // przejście w/ stan spoczynku [Panicked / shift into / a state of rest; N, 125];
> przejściowe / gwarancje węgla [Transitional / guarantees of coal; N, 72];
> Odprysk, // przejście mrozu w/ pieszczotę [Splinter, / passing of frost into / caress; N, 79].

What we see here is rather "przejście" as a shift in intensity and meaning, as a transition between crack and inflammation, as a "path to power" (hyperbole again), as in the "passing of frost into caress" or the shift into a state of rest – the form of the substance changes, but not in terms of a change of its state of concentration or the transformation of one kind of matter into another. No alchemy takes place in Góra's poem; instead, a transmission of intensity through words, as in a children's game of "kick the can": a crack is, after all, in a certain sense, a passage (the cracks of existence), a knag quite literally is an intensified transition, an overgrown remnant (in this sense a transition in time as well, a kind of bridge). At the microlevel, the logic of *Nie* could thus be described as a logic of transitions, but not in the sense of steps (Derridian *pas*), rather transferences, not as continuation of the story of the journey into the woods, but rather as a fairy tale of struggle with trauma, understood as a block to flow, an end to the road.

Micropoetics: Connections

Everyone knows what metaphors have hitherto been drawn from the Deleuzian project and employed as tools in Polish scholarship. The first stage involved focusing on rhizomes and the rhizomatic as narrative, grammatical or hypertext structure; the category of nomads was used in the context of postcolonial reflection, the philosophy of difference and the problems of otherness, and the concept of deterritorialization as language's diversionary power has also been made use of to expropriate the subject from the structures of power. A rather abundant current in scholarship concentrated on the idea, borrowed from Deleuze, of the body without organs, and in literary criticism, machinism is slowly beginning to be accepted, as well as the reflection on desire that derives from it, no doubt due to the recent productive work by our humanities scholars on the theme of affects.

The most intriguing development, for micropoetics, of Deleuzian thought on the molar and molecular structure of desire-producing machines and its direct transfer to the realm of language is Franco Berardi's *And*.[59] His earlier manifesto on the subject of the liberating force of poetry, inspired by the German Romantics (*The Uprising*[60]), which stands in opposition to the commodification of language (*counting*, *indexing*), here is supplemented by linguistic cultural theory. It is language's micrological, molecular capacity for generative transformations in creating meaning that becomes, for Bernardi, the last bastion of the free human being and the uncommodified community. As Deleuze wrote in *A Thousand Plateaus*,

> A rhizome has no beginning or end; it is always in the middle, between things, interbeing, intermezzo. The tree is filiation, but the rhizome is alliance, uniquely alliance. The tree imposes the verb "to be," but the fabric of the rhizome is the conjunction, "and. . . and.. . and. . ." This conjunction carries enough force to shake and uproot the verb "to be."[61]

Using this quotation as his motto, Franco Berardi created his own version of the microcritique of semiocapitalism, in which the language of poetry makes possible the generation of conjunctive concatenation rather than connective concatenation.[62] Such a language thereby maintains a capacity for infinite productivity, for the liberation of desire and the movement of deterritorialization. Berardi thus duplicates – on the plane of grammar, in the smallest structure of conjunctions (hence the title of his book, *And*) – the Deleuzian opposition between molar segmentation (connection) and molecular productivity (conjunction). As long as another word can be added to the utterance, and the elements in the sentence do not duplicate a model assigned from above, there will be no end to the story.

Taking to heart the Deleuzian idea of the rhizome as a "covenant," as a principle of unlimited productivity without beginning or end, transposed to grammatical structures, cutting the text

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[59]F. Berardi, *And. Phenomenology of the End: Sensibility and Connective Mutation*, Cambridge, Massachusetts 2015.

[60]F. Berardi, *The Uprising. On Poetry and Finance*, Los Angeles: Semiotext(e) 2012.

[61]Deleuze, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 25.

[62]"I call conjunction a concatenation of bodies and machines that can generate meaning without following a pre–ordained design, nor obeying any inner law or finality. [...] Connection, on the other hand, is a concatenation of bodies and machines that can generate meaning only following a human–made intrinsic design, only obeying precise rules of behaviour and functioning" (Berardi, *And...*, op. cit.).

every which way, trimming it and splitting it, I have tried in my time to label in *Nie* precisely such rhizomatic chains of actions and the areas that correspond to them. One of the longest and most freighted with meaning naturally turned out to be "widzenie" (seeing) itself. From the core of "patrzenie" (looking) there spread out "opatrzenie" (provision) and "opatrzność" (providence), "odpatrzenie" (looking back), "rozpatrzona" (examined) and "niepatrzenie" (not looking). "Oko" (eye) shifts to "oka" (dots), "oczy" (eyes), "oczka" (eyes e.g. of needles), "naoczne" (visually or with one's own eyes) and "przeoczenie" (oversight), while "widzenie" (seeing) is countered by "przewidzenie" (anticipation, prediction or possibly oversight). If we concentrate on this one area of the flow of meanings, *Nie* appears to be an actualized version of an oculocentric fantasy of modernity, a treatise on seeing and not-seeing, like Andrzej Falkiewicz's *Świetliste* (Luminous) or Tymoteusz Karpowicz's *Odwrócone światło* (The Turned-Away Light). We thereby face again the command that has troubled me from the beginning: "Patrzeć / ciemności. Ubyć."

"To look darkness" does not in any way correspond to "seeing darkness," and thus does not boil down to a simple statement of an objective state of reality. The very opposition of looking and seeing is a recurring one since Góra's early work, probably exhibited most openly in the poem "W fabryce" (In the Factory), which speaks of an "eye of looking" and an "eye of seeing" and the mutually interchanging possibilities of observing and experiencing, witnessing and participating.[63] If we consider that *Nie* employs and problematizes a poetics of witnessing, that it too is, in its way, a kind of testimony, or, as I would prefer to call it, "an over-sighting of testimony," then the phrase "to look darkness" sets in motion the play of tensions fundamental to the book.

We must first of all consider the positive interpretation of this utterance not as an anacoluthon, but as a correct compositional construction. That leads us to note the now-archaic use of the verb "patrzeć" with singular nouns in the genitive case, as in "patrzeć zimy" (see winter) in a poem by Miłosz, or "patrzeć jutra" (see morning). Archaicization and regionalization are frequent elements in Góra's idiolect, so that here too, the presence of such a device should not be ruled out. That would suggest the expression contains the meaning of "looking out for" something in the sense of "expecting," and thus – returning to the context of the poem – encroaching darkness, i.e., nightfall.

Let us assume, however, that it is a broken sentence, that "ciemność" is singular and is personified, that it is performing the function effected by the dative case. The expression "to look darkness" would then be equivalent to the formula "to look someone/something in the eye(s)," as well as the phraseologism "eye to eye." It would thus evoke a situation of potential conflict, but also efforts to reach an understanding, the violation of the boundary between the looking self and the object being looked at. But what if "ciemności" is actually "darknesses," accusative plural, and not dative singular? Then these darknesses turn out to be the object of the gaze, or possibly its mode. And thus we are looking at darknesses (and in fact there is no "we," no person here at all – there is only a bare action, an injunction), we are eliciting shapes from them, or perhaps – and this solution is the one toward which I am more inclined – we are beckoning

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[63] "Teraz to widzę okiem widzenia/ Teraz tam patrzę okiem patrzenia" (Now I see with the eye of seeing / Now I look with the eye of looking) – Góra's poem begins with these lines (K. Góra, "W fabryce" [In the Factory], [in:] *Requiem...*, p. 60).

the darknesses themselves. The process of looking is then revealed not as a cognitive process in the sense of Enlightenment philosophy, with the promise of leaving the Platonic cave, but creative (poietic), not as fixing our eyes on darkness or even as an existential situation (looking within darknesses, cognitive inability), but rather as the duplication of darkness with the help of the power of sight. As if sight itself elicited the darkness in an object, as if the way of being proper to it was in fact "the work of darkness." Not only is speech dark, then, and it is not only the "oversight," recurring in *Nie* with the force of a judicial indictment, that makes the source object disappear. This fundamental ellipsis, eliminating the preposition between "darkness" and "looking," removes all indications of their mutual connectivity, placing the reader in a dark game of overlookings. I claim, however, that oversight is not the most important form of intensification at stake in Góra's poem; that would be combination, felt, as Berardi understands it, as conjunction, and, as Deleuze understands it in his rhizome, as a "covenant." Yet the iterations of "1" in the distichs' formal arrangement do not signify sequence or consequence, do not introduce divisions in terms of power, and nor do they add up to the real number of victims of the catastrophe, as Góra's introductory postulates announced (aside from the fact that the number of victims is itself uncertain, we do not in fact know at which distich the poet stops); they are in fact a kind of "covenant," a combination created on the basis of conjunction, corresponding to molecular multiplicity. The radical division from the beginning of the poem, the enjambments in vocative case of "sio-/stro" and "bra-/cie" is thus not a final division: it is merely the consciousness of divisions and segmentations, inscribed in every subject, a kind of fissure. The next step thus needs to be taken outside oneself.

The logic of the "micrologue" reminds us of the necessity for splitting and sewing together anew narratives, somatic poetics about the healing and scratching of wounds, spatial analysis about breaking up and joining according to the phantasmatic operation of the asyndeton, syntactic analysis about irreducible multiplicity and reduction through the whole, about solitude and brotherhood. The last chain brings to us "being" as divestment: "Być młodszym od ognia" [To be younger than fire; N, 9], "Podjąć resztę, być okłamywanym" [To subtract the remainder, to be deceived; N, 12] "Bić, być bitym do soku" [To beat, to be beaten to a pulp; N, 26], and finally: "Patrzeć ciemności. Ubyć" [N, 36]. "U-bywanie jest operacją, którą bycie przeprowadza na otwartym sercu" (Sub-siding is an operation that being performs on an open heart)[64] – Tadeusz Sławek wrote poetically, commenting on the category he created for the purpose of his study of the works of William Blake:

> the only point that remains still susceptible to the logic of "me" and what is "mine," the only "place," that remained after the removal of the illusion of my control over reality, is suffering. Pain (of any kind) cannot belong to anyone else; the artist's seemingly cool, mathematically precise and indifferent machines exclaim this shocking truth to us: having renounced the role of master of reality, granting indirect speech its grace of independence, I endure in suffering, which remains open to the key of thought, that I am "less" –and likewise I *am* "less" – in fact I only sort of or sometimes am, I am "sub-siding."[65]

[64]T. Sławek, *U−bywać. Człowiek, świat i przyjaźń w twórczości Williama Blake'a* (Sub-siding. Man, the World and Friendship in the Works of William Blake), Katowice 2001, p. 252.
[65]Tamże, pp. 25–252.

With Góra, we do not have the lightness of that invitation, but rather an injunction: to retire the self from the poetics of testimony and let it go to sleep, to subside into "looking darkness," to scamper away outside the power of sight, like Professor Challenger; to expose ourselves to suffering, injury, permanent blindness, like Syga. Legend has it, after all, that the formal experiment that is *Nie* developed in darkness, from the process of monitoring invisible microevents. In an interview, the poet told about the method he adopted to meet the exigencies of its writing:

> **Konrad Góra**: I took a poetic technique from Bly that could somehow be married to divesting from yourself and simultaneously with the non-preponderance of existences over necessity [...] I had the most memorable experience with that method in Poznań, where I got a work-room in the basement of the od:Zysk [squat]; I sat there as far down as you can go, in the middle of the [ground beneath the] town square, in darkness, and the only thing that could happen there – besides the fact that I eavesdropped on the people walking over me, and found it to be an event when somebody went silent, because that is an event, since in fact people are talking all the time – there was a rat, reddish-haired, I called him Kaiser, and he came out to where I was every once in a while, in the end we finally had a lasting bond, I brought him bread and peppermints [...]. I thought that I had driven him away from od:Zysk, because I knew they would come in there with exterminators, but the day before yesterday Łojek from that crew told me that Jezus, one of the dogs there had killed the rat.
>
> **Dawid Mateusz**: So it's quite a time-consuming method and one that doesn't operate without claiming its victims.
>
> **Konrad Góra**: It opens up to more than it closes off.[66]

They say that he who looks for too long at the sun will eventually go blind, but what about he who looks into the inner darkness? A micronaut is something like Blanchot's Orpheus – like him, he looks into a blind spot, in the centre of night, and like him he doesn't see, so he immerses himself in the darkness of the text, revolves gropingly, experiences his own smallness, sub-sides in it.

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[66]K. Góra, D. Mateusz, *Jeszcze nikt nie oślepł od odwracania wzroku* (None Has Yet Gone Blind From Turning Sight Away), http://www.biuroliterackie.pl/biblioteka/wywiady/jeszcze-nikt-nie-oslepl-od-odwracania-wzroku/ [accessed: 30.01.2017].

KEYWORDS

Konrad Góra

literary micrology

Abstract:

This essay undertakes an attempt to complete the "micrological" perspective of the Silesian school led by Aleksander Nawarecki with political impulses absent from its sources, guided by the intellectual constellations of two thinkers hitherto neglected as micrologists: Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze. Voicing opposition to the discipline and scientism of the close reading method, the essay proposes to consider the scholar in the categories of the micronaut, and the process of reading as immersion in the text, following minor tensions and flows of meanings. It simultaneously attempts a philosophical reading of the long poem *Nie* by Konrad Góra as a study in the methodology of seeing, (un)committed blindness and political multiplicity.

Polish poetry after the year 2000

micronautics

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Micropoetics
and Its Contexts

Elżbieta Winiecka

Contemporary polemics about the autonomy and function of literature are concentrated, speaking in the broadest terms and therefore naturally oversimplifying, between two positions that differ in their definition primarily of literature's status and role. The first of these points chiefly to the entanglement of literature in various real-life problems (of society, politics, customs, ethics, and media), which every literary work symbolically represents and depicts, exerting real influence on readers and their attitudes. The artistic values of a work are in the process often relegated to the background, subordinated to other, more important goals. The second approach, frequently modified by successive twentieth-century schools, aims on the contrary to highlight the sovereignty of the literary work as an independent and self-sufficient whole which should be read within the context of its relationships to other similar entities: conventions, literary-historical processes, inner transformations and dependencies, whose repercussions relate to changes in concrete phenomena of a literary nature.[1] For scholars of this bent, literature is of cardinal importance, and they see no need to fill up the chasm between it and its social contexts; instead, they would showcase its separate life and sovereign independence from such things.

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[1] This approach is represented today by, among others, Terry Eagleton, who postulates a return to the partially forgotten principles of reading literature as literature. See Terry Eagleton, *How to Read Literature,* New Haven 2013.

Rita Felski attempts to reconcile these two sides.[2] Softening this rather categorically outlined opposition, Felski rationally proposes building bridges between reading that highlights the particularity and hermeticism of the rules of literary communication as a discrete field of art, demanding highly specialized competencies, and the pragmatic or even naïve reading that takes pleasure and various practical uses from literature. In other words, by opposing such divisions, she shows that inspiration can be drawn from the positions of both camps, without becoming too strongly attached to either of them.

Felski observes, first and foremost, that the academic criteria for evaluating literature have nothing to do with how ordinary readers engage with it. The latter are guided by emotions, are spontaneous and often uncritical toward what they read, and use literature as a supplement to their own lives, allowing themselves to be shaped by the works they read, to be seduced by the stories those works tell, experiencing sometimes acute and extreme emotions and thrills, or sometimes simply extracting knowledge from them about themselves and their lives. Literary scholars, on the contrary, attempt in the course of their professional engagements to demonstrate the separate nature of literature as verbal art, assessing with a gimlet eye the artistic values of a work, and at the same time maintaining mistrust and skepticism towards the truth of the work and toward their own findings. Felski harshly judges that irony is a disease of humanist scholars, who treat critical reading in the spirit of a hermeneutics of suspicion as a binding methodological model. In her opinion, however, the opposition of scepticism and suspicion to a simple-hearted, gullible approach to reading in no way reflects the realities of readerly experience, which abound in variety and can be much subtler than such a dichotomy would suggest. In connection with this, Felski formulates her own plan for research into actual engagement in the text, which would breathe new life into literary studies and bring a fresh breeze of spontaneity and emotion into university libraries: "perhaps the time has come to resist the automatism of our own resistance, to risk alternate forms of aesthetic engagement,"[3] Felski writes, while also reminding readers that today's literary studies practices are located not in the quiet of the library, but rather amid other, much more expansive and perceptually attractive media, with which literature must contend for its audience's attention.

> If literary studies is to survive the twenty-first century, it will need to reinvigorate its ambitions and its methods by forging closer links to the study of other media rather than clinging to ever more tenuous claims to exceptional status. Such collaborations will require, of course, scrupulous attention to the medium-specific features of artistic forms.[4]

Such is Felski's premise. What she has in mind is thus both a broadening of sensitivity to non-linguistic forms of cultural communication and an acknowledgement of the fact that theory does not always know more than the work, and that in connection with that fact it need not position itself at a higher level of consciousness than the latter, while the scholar should accept that he himself can learn something (if only something about himself, even) in

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[2] R. Felski, *Uses of Literature*, Malden 2008.

[3] Felski, *Uses of Literature*, p. 4.

[4] Felski, *Uses of Literature*, pp. 21-22.

the course of reading. Rita Felski thus proposes a "hybrid phenomenology," wielding a first-person perspective in research, but focusing its work on the way phenomena emerge. By postulating a conscious anti-intellectualism, a corporealization and heightened spontaneity of reception, Felski points toward the need to restore the experiential dimension to professional reading. Practices of reading are ambiguous and not divisible into those that focus on the poetics of the work and its aesthetic values and those that constitute a form of consumption of those values. What matters in reading is rather the conveyance of complexity, opacity and problematic aspects of reading and what these produce. Conventions, methods, and repeatable procedures clash with the pleasure of reading for oneself. And that very individuality, subjectivism, and emotionalism of the work's aesthetic perception are what Felski is calling for.

She thus points the reader toward such aesthetic categories as recognition, enchantment and shock, which she claims readers must experience prior to taking the position of a critical commentator and scholar. This new "close reading" is a kind of opposite to the close reading that promotes immanent, penetrating and analytical reading concentrated on the text and its meanings. Felski's proposal for a description of the selected forms of engagement that the literary work elicits represents an attempt to look at it not as an autonomous object, but as a phenomenological form of existence which only comes into being in the reader's consciousness. Hence her premise of "[d]isentangling individual strands of reader response and sticking them under the microscope one at a time for a closer look," though it "is [...] a highly artificial exercise."[5] For the procedure is in fact no more artificial than the traditional analysis of the poetics of a work, and has a better chance than strategies of text-centreed reception "to capture something of the grain and texture of everyday aesthetic experiences."[6] The belief that understanding the ways and reasons why we read can lead to a renewal in literary studies, and perhaps also to a return of experience to literary life, leads Felski to formulate a postulate of developing a peculiarly understood "microaesthetics" that would exhibit the affective and cognitive dimension of reading.

However reasonable her premise of a new kind of close contact with the work and her call for closing the divisions between exponents of diametrically opposed approaches to literature may sound, they nonetheless give rise to certain doubts. Her critique of literary studies' consciousness and self-consciousness, which, in negating the simple pleasures of the text, debase spontaneous readings, as well as the appeal she issues for suspending ironic suspicion toward our own methodological procedures, in the final analysis seem rather unrealistic. It is hard to efface a hundred-year history of efforts by literary theory, set in motion on the basis of changes in the philosophy of consciousness and language, as if Felski's doubts regarding the attitudes of the discipline in which she works were directed merely at a caprice of bored intellectuals. And the return to the direct reading experience that she writes about seems nothing less than utterly impossible.

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[5] Ibid., p. 132.
[6] Ibid.

If I thus invoke her proposal in the context of reflections on micropoetics, it is because there resounds within it a postulate repeated and implemented with increasing frequency in Felski's works. I refer to the departure from stiff rules of reading in favor of individualized, microscopic reading practices, unafraid to admit the feebleness of methods of literary analysis which in the past frequently took on the shape of metanarratives that usurped, at the outset of a reading, the right to determine what literature is and what the tasks of the critical reader are. In the face of today's whirling revolutions in the humanities and literary studies, Felski's admission of initial helplessness and unavoidable subjectivism seems simply a much safer and more honest point of departure for reflections on literary artefacts. Such a position of openness and caution constitutes the introductory phase of every micropoetological reading.

In light of the peripeteia described above, the proposal for a revitalization of careful reading proposed by the Silesian school of literary micrology sounds intriguing.[7] That proposal suggests yet another way out of the impasse in which contemporary literary studies, entangled in cultural, social and political contexts, find themselves. It is a way that, judging by appearances at least, leads to old and familiar paths – calling for careful and inquisitive reading, for attentiveness to the analytical detail, for listening closely to the melody of the phrase, the rhythm of the line and the resonance of alliteration, and, in the process, for the restoration of a greater focus on the sensual and corporeal dimension of reading. This is the old school of close reading, which nevertheless, placed in a new theoretical and cultural context, can lead to new discoveries and sometimes revelatory conclusions. It allows us to expose the subcutaneous (subtextual), that which has frequently been stifled in reception by the dominant discourse. These nuances, discovered in the course of a minute reading, are sometimes tropes consciously muted by the author, and occasionally are clues left on purpose, barely making themselves known, which only the most receptive reader-detective is capable of joining together in a logical network of connections and dependencies.[8]

"What is micrology?" – Aleksander Nawarecki asks himself in the introduction to the collection, an essay entitled "Skala mikro w badaniach literackich" (The Micro Scale in Literary Studies). [9] As the inventor of a new term for what seems to be an entirely familiar position

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[7] The larger framework of this project included the following publications: *Miniatura i mikrologia literacka*, vol. 1, ed. A. Nawarecki, Katowice 2000, *Miniatura i mikrologia literacka*, vol. 2, ed. A. Nawarecki, Katowice 2001, *Miniatura i mikrologia literacka*, vol. 3, ed. A Nawarecki, B. Mytych – Forajter, Katowice 2003, *Skala mikro w badaniach literackich* (The Micro Scale in Literary Scholarship), ed. A. Nawarecki, M. Bogdanowska, Katowice 2005. The following book is also written in a similar spirit: A. Nawarecki, *Parafernalia* (Paraphernalia), Katowice 2014.

[8] A good example of the effectiveness of this type of study, performed independently of the Katowice theoreticians' proposals, is Agnieszka Gajewska's book *Zagłada i gwiazdy. Przeszłość w prozie Stanisława Lema* (The Holocaust and the Stars. The Past in the Prose of Stanisław Lem, Poznań 2016). This Poznań scholar, using an unusual method of microlecture, managed to write a new, in many ways revolutionary, chapter in Lem studies. A careful reading, concentrating on the analysis of literary texts and historical sources, placed within biographical and literary-historical contexts, was supported, in this case, by a sensitivity feminist in character and an acute awareness of what is not obvious and sometimes is simply passed over in silence. By using this method, Gajewska was able to investigate the presence in Lem's prose of nearly imperceptible echoes of the trauma of the Holocaust, which in previous studies of the writer's work were either completely omitted or trivialized.

[9] A. Nawarecki, "Czarna mikrologia" (Black Micrology), in: *Skala mikro w badaniach literackich*, ed. A. Nawarecki and M. Bogdanowska, Katowice 2005, p. 9

taken toward literature, the author gives a precise indication of the problems connected with defining its properties, scope and specifics. This micrological and micropoetological hustling and bustling which Polish scholars have been declaredly engaged in for about twenty years, can most broadly be described as distinguished by intellectual passion and inquisitiveness, and at the same time conscious of its limitations and suspicious toward accepted premises for the examination of literary particles. But after all, if we overlook the contingent, historically situated term for this position, it turns out that what we are considering here is a permanent component of the philologist's workshop, the philologist, who since antiquity, that is to say, since forever, has inclined attentively to examine every detail perceived in the text, inquiring into its values and meanings by all available means. In fact Nawarecki is perfectly well aware of that; in attempting to clarify, for skeptics, the seriousness and function of micrology, he invokes a variety of scholarly movements, indicating that the micrological approach is not reserved for certain selected ways of reading or exclusively for contemporary ones. On the contrary Micropoetics represents philology's natural element; here we see its finesse, precision and role in revealing what escapes our attention in a casual, everyday glance, reading or understanding. This is also what makes it a phenomenon and herein lies its opportunity: micrology unites within its investigations representatives of dissimilar schools and views, as can splendidly be seen in the publications prepared so far by the Katowice team of scholars.

Thus not only does there not exist a single, coherent definition of micrology, but there is, also, inscribed in its projected treatment of the text, an inability to set clear rules, repeatable principles, or firmly fixed premises that would make possible cohesion and the maintenance of order in the conduct of its adepts with the object of study. That object itself in fact demands separate attention: does it consist of a single text? A literary genre? A sentence? A word? Or perhaps an author's entire oeuvre? It appears to depend each time on the initial (subjective!) premises accepted by the individual scholar. Because what matters here is the comparative perspective, which exhibits differences in scale, allowing us to highlight the fundamental fact that small is small in comparison with what is large (or, also, depending on our needs: official, dominant, manifest, self-explanatory, important, inspiring). And that what hitherto was overlooked or only fleetingly shown, particularly in the panoramic perspective on the history of literature, now finds itself at the centre of scholarly interest. As we can see, the scale of micro is micro only when there exists in our consciousness a broader context for it: macroproblems, macroprocesses and macrostructures.

Though micrology thus raises more questions than it provides answers, it is in that sense an exercise in humanistic thought which in the contemporary era has a chance to become singularly valuable and useful. To confirm his own micrological intuitions, and at the same time for the purpose of dissolving the doubts of those who are not entirely convinced of the potential cognitive possibilities of micrology, Nawarecki cited the definition developed at the beginning of the 21st century by Przemysław Czapliński. This Poznań-based critic, with a masterly aplomb that is Borgesian in both spirit and execution, forges an encyclopedia entry whose aim is to validate both the phenomenon and the object of his research. On the back cover of his *Mikrologi ze śmiercią* (Micrologues with Death), we find the following extract:

micrologue <gr. mikrós+lógos=small+word, study, concept, truth> 1. *hum.* Interpreter of small fragments, scholar of small things; 2. *gr.* minor speech (*lógos mikrón*), a term in ancient rhetoric defining accidental utterances, spoken to random listeners, members of the household, objects or oneself, compositionally and stylistically unpredictable, concerning affairs of the individual, serving to express intimate feelings and thoughts, and also constituting a form of engagement in non-systematic thought – the tradition of minor speech included the Socratic dialogue, the soliloquy, the monologue, the fragment; 3. *clas.* feeble, incomplete conversation (mikron logos), dialogue with a silent addressee, represented by probable utterances (see spoken monologue); 4. *est.* a part of the whole not assigned to a definite position and compositionally independent (see prologue, epilogue); 5. *gr. phil.* small truth, uncertain accuracy, formulated based on a repeatable event but which follows a different trajectory each time (see chaotics); 6. *gr.* individual destiny, personal fate (see logos); 7. *deconstr.* independent fragment of a conversation composed of many utterances (see polilogue) and conducted in conditions of unattainable understanding, disposed towards the definition of differences and characterization of their status; 8. *postmoder.* small narration; 9. *phil. coll.* everyday wisdom, growing out of domestic activities, conscious of its limitations and ignorance, finding its extension in talking, betrayed by generalization and synthesis (see "I know that I know nothing," Bear of Little Brain, bustlement).[10]

Although everything in this definition is true, nothing is what it seems to suggest. The phenomena referred to in it are ephemeral and fragile, eluding unambiguous definition and concretization. Hence the explications on the back cover sketch out the broad horizons of micrological reflection rather than unambiguously clarifying anything. Czapliński explains, for the purposes of his own research that the micrologues he tracks in contemporary prose are "dialogues with a silent addressee, represented by probable utterances, small narratives in search of a single destiny expressed in idiomatic language, uncertain accuracies, formulated based on a repeatable event but which follows a different trajectory each time."[11] That is how the uncertain object of the observation conducted by Czapliński takes shape. As far as the micrological perspective understood by him is concerned, it rather resembles the position of a mistrustful ethnologist-explorer, learning about a foreign land and encountering the incomprehensible otherness of its inhabitants, who must search for an entirely new language for his experiences, rather than a scientist confident in his methods and purpose who observes and describes an unchanging object under precisely defined laboratory conditions.

The micrologist sets forth with a sense of always insufficient competencies and the incompleteness of accumulated data, and in connection with that fact is continuously ready to undermine his own findings. And that, in my view, is probably the most important philosophical change that has surfaced in the micrological approach to the literary text. What was always a feature of the humanities as a sphere of understanding rather than of knowledge – the non-autonomy of its foundations and non-finality of its findings – now takes on the form of an equal subject of knowledge. It is through work with the text and by the text that the interpreter learns as much about the read work as about him or herself – his or her limitations, predispositons and possibilities.

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[10]P. Czapliński, *Mikrologi ze śmiercią. Motywy tanatyczne we współczesnej literaturze polskiej* (Micrologues with Death. Thanatic Motifs in Contemporary Polish Literature), Poznań 2001, back cover.

[11]Ibid., p. 10.

To confirm that this approach has its own estimable tradition, Czapliński lists the styles of interpretation of which he feels himself to be the continuator or to which he sees himself as indebted. The names of scholars and schools that he mentions are the same ones cited by Nawarecki: the phantasmatics of Maria Janion, hermeneutics, the American school of close reading, deconstructionism, Roland Barthes's interpretations and his concept of punctum, Jean-Francois Lyotard's diagnosis of the postmodern condition of culture with its key thesis on the end of grand narratives, finally, the *krzątactwo* (bustlement) of Jolanta Brach-Czaina, cultivated in her *Szczeliny istnienia* (The Cracks of Existence), as well as the poetry of Czesław Miłosz and his position of "attentiveness."[12]

At the same time, Czapliński notes that all of these styles of reading preserve the quality of being authorial, unrepeatable, single-use approaches, and what connects them is their focus of attention on details. "This may be a special virtue of micrologues, that they cannot be duplicated: unlike methods (that is, forms of macrology), they are not transferable."[13] Micrology is thus "reading scraps,"[14] because in the end both parts of this definition, reading and the scrap, are not in themselves comprehensible; the scope of possible ways of encountering texts is practically inexhaustible, and the quasi-method itself appears as something eclectic, discontinuous and polymorphic.[15] Particularly if we take into account that the interpreter is not an impartial observer, but part of the communicative relationship which he enters into and co-designs.

Micrology can easily refer as well to the situation of other, non-humanistic fields of knowledge, indicating that the "fashion for the small"[16] is not simply a project of literary scholars, but the symptom of a broader interest in the micro scale, relating to the social and natural sciences too, such as: microeconomics, microsociology, microsurgery or microbiology. These similarities are to some extent limited to purely lexical convergence, and the analogies are essentially distant metonymies or metaphors. It should, however, be observed that in reality, both observed cultural, social and psychological processes and the influence of the development of new technologies in medicine and computer science, can be connected to the transformation in the cognitive approach to many problems. Precise or individualized micro-analyses inspire more confidence than those that refer to broad perspectives of diagnosis and generalization.

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[12]To this list, following Nawarecki, we could also add Gaston Bachelard's concept of miniature (See *The Poetics of Space*, trans. Maria Jolas, New York 1964, Chapter 7; Jean-Pierre Richard's theory of microreading (*Microlectures I*, Seuil, Poétique 1979, *Microlectures II. Pages Paysages*, Seuil, "Poétique", 1984), Roman Jakobson's microscopy ("Une microscopie du dernier „Spleen" dans les Fleur du mal," in: *Questions de poetique*, Paris 1973.), as well as the neologisms that appear in a variety of contexts and feature the prefixes mini- or micro- in Bakhtin, Benjamin, and Foucault. I will only add that I do not address the topic of small forms in this article because I feel they constitute a separate problem and should rather be linked to the authorial philosophy (however dubious) and the lives of particular poets and writers. If we were interested in making a list of all the artists who appreciate the "whiff of detail," the list would be very long. And perhaps it would simply have to contain the names of all verbal artists? Here we are only interested in micropoetics as a poetics of reception and a way of engaging in literary scholarly reflection.

[13]P. Czapliński, *Mikrologi*, p. 10.

[14]Ibid..

[15]See ibid., pp. 10-11.

[16]See E. Suszek, "Moda na małe? Innowacyjność śląskiej mikrologii literackiej" (A Fashion for the Small? The Innovative Nature of Silesian Literary Micrology), *Postscriptum Polonistyczne* 2016, no. 1(17), pp. 179-191.

The most interesting connections are found between literary micrology and microhistory. As Ewa Domańska has written, this method was developing in historiographical studies as early as the 1970s as the "answer to the crisis of the traditional understanding of history, which revealed itself in, among other things, the interest in the 'secret dimension of reality' (Levinas), in the turn from macro to micro, from external to internal, from history as process to history as human experience."[17]

Employing the method of "thick description" taken from interpretive anthropology[18] and focusing on individual case studies, historians, maintaining a subjective perspective, have begun to describe small areas in time and space, lingering primarily over those spheres and domains of life that escaped the attention of traditional history. And thus the everyday life documented in texts, customs, the consciousness and beliefs of people, often ordinary people absent from the pages of history textbooks, have become the realm of inquiry for microhistoriographers, who are aware that the past is woven from an incalculable number of individual fates which constitute the undersoil and factual environment and also the conditions for great events and historical processes.

Everyday life, until now considered the transparent background to events, has also become a subject of interest to cultural anthropologists and literary scholars. It is being newly discovered.[19] Official strategies of action, overseen by institutions of power, and grand historical narratives are being contrasted with everyday tactics: ordinary people's personal methods of coping with the models of life, thought and reading imposed on them from above:

> Historians focused on studies of small communities and particular individuals for the purpose of obtaining both maximum depth in their view of past reality and a more natural and vivid picture of it. Microhistory is thus qualitative and miniature rather than quantitative and globalizing in its intentions.[20]

A similar approach marks literary micrology, which – first in the phase of critical deconstruction of rational bases and premises of interpretation of texts, phenomena and processes, and later in the form of innumerable other ways of conducting subjective readings, critical of their object, subtle, careful, and simultaneously subversive, represented by the styles of reading of the adherents of various schools of hermeneutics, psychoanalysis, feminist critics, gender studies and queer theory, postcolonial studies and many other approaches – revealed inside texts what hitherto seemed insufficiently important, marginal, incomprehensible, or even imperceptible.

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[17]E. Domańska, *Mikrohistorie. Spotkania w międzyświatach* (Microhistories. Meetings in Inbetweenworlds), expanded and updated second edition, Poznań 2005, pp. 270-271.

[18]See Clifford Geertz, "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture," in Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*, New York 1973, pp. 3-30.

[19]See M. de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall, Berkeley 1984; M. de Certeau, L. Giard, P. Mayol, *The Practice of Everyday Life Volume 2: Living and Cooking*, trans. Timothy J. Tomasik, Minneapolis 1998.

[20]E. Domańska, op. cit., p. 273.

The horizon of the problematics of the microscale also includes microphysics, usually placed at the opposite pole from the range of interests proper to the humanities. Surprisingly, however, if we carefully consider the theoretical premises and the consequences that the discoveries of this discipline have brought, it may appear that it, too, has exerted considerable, though indirect influence on the epistemological conditions that bear on the work of the contemporary micrologue, who moves in a world that is shaky, unstable and elusive. Because microphysics is the physics of atoms and elementary particles.[21] Its progenitor was Niels Bohr, who in 1913 presented his model of the atom. The revolutionary discovery that an electron can shift in an atom from orbit to orbit, in the process emitting or absorbing a quantum of light (a photon), initiated the development of quantum mechanics. Through that new science, the world and vision of it studied and described by classical physics faded into the past. For more than ninety years, that is, since the moment of its origins, quantum mechanics, and with it the contemporary theory of science, have been developing based on the principle of uncertainty, formulated in 1926 by Bohr's student, Werner Heisenberg. The principle relates to the properties of microparticles – endowed with a double, corpuscular-wave nature, these are the equivalents of the particles that so impress the literary-scholarly lovers of small things – and states that the more exactly we measure the speed of a particle, the less exact is our description of its position, and vice versa. There is thus no way to overcome the limit on the exactitude of measurement, which is dependent neither on the type of particle nor on the methods used to study it. The irremovable impossibility of precisely defining the actual state of the observed object meant that quantum mechanics, instead of defining a concrete result of measurement, focuses on indicating an aggregate of possible results and defining the probability of each one's materialization. The theory of science thus describes not so much real states of the world as certain properties of what is being observed in a given situation. The principle of uncertainty has also influenced the way we imagine the macroworld. It has been revealed as a constituent feature of it and has radically changed the way we understand and explain phenomena. The area of science, previously the domain of certain and permanent laws, has been encroached upon by chance and unpredictability.

"Quantum mechanics is based to a large extent on phenomena that contradict our intuition, that defy all of our knowledge based on the world of macro"[22] – so writes a reviewer of the book *Quantum Mechanics: The Theoretical Minimum*. Erwin Schrödinger's famous thought experiment with a cat closed in a hermetic box with one atom, whose disintegration would activate poisonous properties, nonetheless shows that it is difficult to define the boundary between the micro- and macroscopic worlds, in the latter of which the phenomenon of the superposition of particles (their occupation of two positions or experience of two states simultaneously) is not possible. In keeping with quantum mechanics, which states that particles have the ability to find themselves in superposition only in an envi-

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[21]This part of my analysis is based on general knowledge (microscopic in the sense of spatial dimensions, not detail) and various works of popular science read at different times, particularly the following books: Abraham Pais's: *Niels Bohr's Times: In Physics, Philosophy, and Polity*, Oxford 1991, Richard P. Feynman's, *QED – The Strange Theory of Light and Matter*, Princeton 2014, and selected passages from the textbook by Richard P. Feynman, *The Feynman Lectures on Physics: Quantum mechanics. Vol. 3*, Boston 1965.

[22]R. Kosarzycki, Review: *Quantum Mechanics. The Theoretical Minimum* – Leonard Susskind, Art Friedeman, http://www.pulskosmosu.pl/2016/05/24/recenzja-mechanika-kwantowa-teoretyczne-minimum-leonard-susskind-art-friedeman/ [accessed: 9.02. 2016].

ronment with no observer, Schrödinger's cat should be simultaneously alive and dead. So why is that not true? The explanations significantly exceed both the scope of the present author's competencies and the needs of the argument being made here. Nevertheless, this contradiction between what experience and common sense tell us, on the one hand, and what we learn from the findings of physicists and micrologists, on the other, constitutes a form of powerful (because it derives from experimental sciences) justification for the contemporary status of the humanities, including literary studies. Micropoetics have a role to play, if we believe that what matters is not the scale of the object of study and the values, implied in the interest in the small, of appreciation for and distinguishing among minutiae, interpretative detail, and trivia, but rather an epistemological position that manifests self-reflection, a spirit of inquiry, discernment, suspicion and an awareness of the situationality of the scholar's position (its contingency upon a variety of conditions) that is proper to the natural sciences.

Modest micropoetological studies therefore lead to the displacement of previous literary frames and macro-orders that we have been accustomed to treat with uncritical acceptance. Micrological readings undermine fixed truths regarding particular texts, the nature of their understanding and their function in macroprocesses. In prioritizing closeness of inspection, micrology simultaneously trusts, as described by Aleksandra Kunce, "all kinds of **simplifications, inruns of thought, microstumbling** in the hope of succeeding in finding the **entanglement of thought in what is both permanent and variable at the same time**, whole and fragmentary, continuous and punctual, etc."[23]

It is worth mentioning that it was in fact knowledge of the principles of quantum mechanics that made possible the development of contemporary nuclear energy science and electronics, including the invention of electronic devices such as microprocessors, transistors, televisions, computers, lasers and the electron microscope. If we treat the classical optical microscope as a metonymy of the position of attention, it is that attention of the Cartesian-Kantian subject, who attempts to plumb and next to unify the world of the work within the boundaries of his own consciousness. At the same time, contemporary electron microscopes, which allow scientists access to microworlds, wherein they deal with the electron clusters in the void, demand a revision of our imagining of the micrological method as guarantor of cognitive precision and inquisitiveness, directing us toward probabilistic premises that contradict the Newtonian world view.

At the end of this thread in our microreflections, let us observe that contemporary literary studies, like physics, construct the object of their inquiry and everything that we can say concerning that topic relates to the imaginings we constuct based on the premises we adopted. Its body of knowledge is thus essentially a series of approximations rather than truths about the nature of the discipline's object of study. Micropoetics, in depriving the interpreter of hope for supporting his own findings in something beyond questioning, awakens, on the one hand, a peculiar kind of fear of the loss of legitimization; on the other,

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[23]A. Kunce, *O motylu i dyskretnym uroku mikrologii* (On the Butterfly and the Discreet Charm of Micrology), in: *Skala mikro w badaniach literackich*, p. 39 [emphasis in original].

however, it inspires us to continually undertake new, adventurous readings of works already well-known to us.

This particular property of micropoetological studies thus forces scholars to maintain their mistrust toward their own findings. As a perspective of seeing,[24] it cannot perpetuate uniformity or finality in its judgments. And at the same time it treats each detail as a trace of the presence and influence of the macroworld, because what is most important is not self-contained but is entangled in a network of real connections, associations and barely felt intuitions that do not fit into systematic thought, and at the same time cannot exist without it.

> In this sense **micrology becomes the warden of the nature of our thought as such** – crowded due to lack of coherence, depth and causality, but also underpinned by individual tendencies and the desire for systems. Is it possible not to think micrologically if we wish to track the subcutaneous rhythm of reality?[25]

– this is the rhetorical question posed by one commentator on micrological theory.

Micropoetics as a poetics of reception thus not only undertakes an effort to redefine the object of its inquiry, but above all, demands a new definition of the system in which the reading is taking place. It must be clearly said that the position occupied by the scholar and the way he defines his role is far from unrelated to the results of his analysis. The link to the category of micropoetics is the attentiveness that should, as seems obvious on the face of it, mark every interpreter. However, the attention we devote to particular elements of reality or a work is not a neutral or universal category. On the contrary, it is dependent on many historical factors that influence what we find in the field of our perception and why one element instead of another is found to be important, interesting, striking, worthy of deeper analysis. Jonathan Crary, in his work on the historical transformations of the category of attentiveness, underscores:

> Normative explanations of attentiveness arose directly out of the understanding that a full grasp of a self-identical reality was not possible and that human perception, conditioned by physical and psychological temporalities and processes, provided at most a provisional, shifting approximation of its objects.[26]

The cognitive model in which the subject upholds the cohesion of his world view is neither strictly optical nor, for that matter, a faithful representation of reality. An entire tradition of philosophers who have undertaken a critique of presence – Jacques Derrida, Maurice Blanchot, Georges Bataille, Jacques Lacan – has pointed to the lack that figures in every perceptual experience and the related belief in the impossibility of unmediated immersion in any experience whatever. The world does not present itself to the looker directly, and perception

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[24]See A. Kunce, op. cit., p. 43.
[25]A. Kunce, p. 45, [emphasis in original].
[26]J. Crary, *Suspensions of Perception: Attention, Spectacle, and Modern Culture*, Cambridge 2001, p. 4.

is not atemporal. This pertains as much to the everyday attention we turn to things, people, and events that we (in imagistic terms) duplicate each time as it does (in a still greater degree) to cultural texts: readings, images, films, etc. The attention with which we turn toward our selected objects (or those imposed on us) lays bare precisely this contradictory condition. When we sharpen our focus on an object of inspection, that causes the displacement of other elements of reality beyond the purview of our perception; that reality thus fades and loses meaning. This is what gives perception its twofold nature: it must always lose something to gain something else; in perceiving a detail, it loses the whole, and in gazing at the whole, it misses the details.

Referencing the etymology of the word "attention" and the implications of its relation to the word "tension" (both words also suggest, or can suggest waiting and expectation) Crary focuses on the position of the subject. As it succumbs to rapture or experiences contemplation, this subject "is both immobile and ungrounded."[27] A state of suspension, disturbance, or even the negation of perception thus accompanies the deepest experiences of immersion in something and absorption. For that reason, to the characteristics described by Rita Felski of readerly affective enchantment and fascination with the work, we might add that when it affects a reader in this way, it deprives him or her, at least for a time, of critical aptitude. And even though we are dealing here not with two mutually exclusive reading attitudes, but only two stages in the perception of a work, it must, perhaps, nonetheless be admitted that a micropoetics concentrated on the work and a microaesthetics interested in readerly perception of the work project two different perspectives for analysis of the communicative situation, two distinct objects of study.

It is instructive to consider how Jonathan Crary reconstructs the historicity of the category of attention. Retracing the path demarcated years ago by Walter Benjamin, he shows that it is not so much a predisposition of the subject as a cultural construct that undergoes inner transformations, but also submits to sociotechnical influences, among which the technological context plays a significant role. It is through the technological orders that certain "natural" predispositions of the subject to maintain attention, as well as toward the strain of reflective activity, take shape. That type of orientation was propitious to the technology of print, with its most highly prized achievement – literary culture, forming a particular type of intellectual activity that we now usually link to hermeneutic inquisitiveness. In the contemporary world, a feature of the dominant visual technologies (cinema, computer, Internet) is "the imposition of a permanent low-level attentiveness [...]."[28] That in turn has the result that the reverie relating to the state of inattention "now most often takes place with preset rhythms, images, speeds, and circuits that reinforce the irrelevance and dereliction of whatever is not compatible with their formats."[29]

It is curious that Aleksander Nawarecki points – on the horizon of micropoetological literary scholarly reflection – to the chaosmic diffusion and reproduction that are now duplicated

[27]J. Crary, p. 10.
[28]Crary, p. 77.
[29]Crary, p. 78.

and represented by the internet.[30] It is thus worth considering to what extent the literary phenomena present in digital virtuality satisfy the demands of micrology, and above all – to what extent they submit to the rules of micropoetological readings. The micro scale, in which the algorithmic processes that constitute the surface layer of visibility in digital media, can in no way be brought into accord with the rules of micropoetics as a strategy of reading oriented toward profound exploration and detailed analysis. There is no connection of cause and effect or probability between the mathematical languages used for programming and the audiovisual codes that we deal with on the plane of cultural interfaces that could become the object of micrological analysis and interpretation. Literary scholars do not even possess the language to name the nature of such phenomena, and we therefore use visualizing metaphors that allow us to imagine that binary code occupies some kind of material space-time realm. Finally, reading computer science source code, despite not being impossible, can only slightly help to understand what appears at the cultural level of the digital project.

In addition, the environment of electronic media, though built from pixels, that is, micropoints, each of which is capable of being isolated and examined in an enlarged form revealing its mathematical nature, projects a kind of reception that is a negation of attention. Coming too close causes the image to become washed out and distorted. Thus, in defiance of the micrological hopes in which Nawarecki seems to find an affinity with the new medial situation, we can posit, with a high degree of probability, the thesis that there is no place in the Internet for micrologist literary scholars. Or, put differently: literary scholarship – let us repeat once again after Rita Felski – must submit to transformation and form relationships with other media, as well as examining the qualities of the artistic forms specific to each of them. Furthermore, the micropoetics of digital forms will demand from literary scholars an expansion of their competencies, to include (among others) those in the domain of knowledge of the basics of the programs used to create internet art and literary hypertexts.[31]

Intellect, the tool of the micrologist that distances him from virtual artefacts, is unintentionally becoming, in the milieu of digital literature, an ally of the conservative project for a return to critical philosophy. At the same time, according not only to Felski's theses but also to the findings of scholars of the affective, performative or somatic turns, understanding is not tied to reflectivity alone. If we want to understand the nature of new cultural phenomena, we must replace (or supplement) the contemplative posture with affective categories: shock, enchantment, bewilderment, fascination, disgust, repulsion. To examine our reaction as that of an active participant in communication. Because the scholar is part of the system that he (or she) attempts to characterize. He always conducts his analysis from an internal perspective and that impossibility of absolute distance inscribes in his situation the conditions for the failure of operations that seek to furnish unambiguous conclusions. To the extent that at-

[30]See A. Nawarecki, "Mikrologia, genologia, miniatura" (Micrology, Study of Genres, Miniature), in: *Miniatura i mikrologia* (Miniature and Micrology), ed. A Nawareckiego, vol. 1, Katowice 2000, p. 28.

[31]It is worth remembering that the creation of electronic literature also demands that its authors possess these kinds of competencies. At a website which presents the technical bases of hypertexts, we read: "To young authors who are starting out on their path as authors of internet art, we recommend [...] a deep initiation into the mysteries of HTML5, JavaScript, jQuery, Cocoa and Objective-C." http://techsty.art.pl/warsztaty/warsztaty/warsztaty.htm [accessed 10. 02. 2017]

tention, as a cultural construct, still upholds the model of a coherent and logical object, ruled over by a concentated and watchful observer, then in the moment when instead of dealing with an object we deal with a dynamic event, attentiveness ceases to provide a guarantee of understanding.

This is true not only because multimedia demand divisible attention, and that naturally is tied to an increased shallowness of perception and its distraction. Above all, the very nature of internet objects rules out reflective, contemplative or hermeneutic reception, oriented toward close, intimate contact. Their dynamism, variability, fluidity and momentality mean that we either allow ourselves to be transported by impressions, immersing ourselves in what the interactive medium offers (which is far from simple – in keeping with the self-reflexive self-consciousness of the scholar described above), or we proceed in defiance of their nature: we will pause the image and subject it to a micrological frame-by-frame or screen-by-screen analysis (though doing so is technically not always possible). But then, focused on the staticized detail, we lose sight of what seems a condition of understanding cultural change: a new kind of aesthetic experience, built on instant, short-lived and ephemeral stimuli intended to act only (or primarily) upon the sensual and emotional sphere. That sphere can productively be studied by the new microaesthetics proposed by Rita Felski, demanding the borders of literary studies be opened to other media. At the same time, this method remains for the time being within the realm of plans, because the manifestations of e-literature and other multimedial reconfigurations of verbal art available at present in virtual reality, engage critical thought to an undoubtedly greater extent than they do the emotions. By forcing interactive co-participation in the creation of a disposable artefact, they place the scholar in a triple role: as creator, participant, and commentator. And that once again redefines his cognitive possibilities.[32]

It is therefore worthwhile to keep in mind that attention adapts to new technological conditions. Each medium structures our perceptual experience. The screen is now the main tool that mediates the receiver's encounter with external reality and texts of culture: of verbal as well as audiovisual culture. Distraction of attention is a fundamental property of the screen. If, since the time of Kant, the transcendental synthesis of the field of knowledge, which was always partial and fragmentary, has presented a problem, we now speak of the total disintegration of perception. We have bid adieu to the dream of synthesis. And precisely that antisystem, decomposed perception represents fertile ground for micropoetological scholarship in literary studies. They are, at least to a certain extent, an expression of longing for the depth, seriousness and sensibleness of the intimate realm that have been lost as a result of great historical and technological processes. At the same time, micropoetics encounters a fundamental difficulty, about which Crary has written convincingly, on the way to its object: we today are subjects incapable of the sustained concentration necessary in order to be able to consistently place the studied object in the order of attentiveness.

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[32]Here I omit the problem of the status of interactive hypertextual phenomena and/or multimedia digital objects due to their complexity and tenuous connection with the topic of my article. Intuition, however, tells me that micropoetics is not yet up to the task of describing the phenomena just mentioned.

Disturbed perception was the distinguishing characteristic of modern subjectivity for Georges Simml, Walter Benjamin, Siegfried Kracauer, and Theodor Adorno.[33] These sociologists believed distraction and deconcentration to result from irreversible changes in culture. Crary, on the other hand, shows that distraction and concentration are points on a continuum, and the shift from focus to deconcentration occurs gradually and imperceptibly.[34] If we accept, following Hannah Arendt, that a collapse of contemplation has taken place in our culture,[35] the cultural effects of those changes in the form of the downfall of grand narratives, the loss of a holistic vision of the world and the permanent disintegration of the personality are merely consequences of great processes that have been happening for several hundred years.

In this situation, micrology is revealed to be the remedy for the changes that have come to pass in culture. Somewhat like a relic of the historical sensitivity that was bound to the philosophy of the modern, putatively integrated and autonomous subject, micrology attempts to oppose the phenomena which play a distracting role and demand from us multitasking and divisible attention rather than focusing on a single object.

A somewhat similar formulation of the problem of micrology, likewise based on a foundation of philosophical reflection, has been proposed by Paweł Jędrzejko,[36] who expressing his attachment to the traditional, autonomous nature of literary studies, nevertheless opts for a scientization of micrology. He finds it to be a clearly defined scholarly perspective and treats it as a bridge between Gadamerian hermeneutics and the contemporary critique of consciousness. Microanalysis (and microdeconstruction) in his presentation are stages in the workings of the hermeneutic circle. Micrology would theoretically be a field in the border area between descriptive and historical poetics, "dealing with the literary detail, its 'life' and transformations in the text or texts, concentrating on the analysis of the role and function of detail in the formation of the immanent poetics of the work, or as well – in its diachronic formulation – analyzing the detail as indicator of historical changes in poetics at the macroscale."[37] It would therefore represent the position of a fairly traditional textual analysis. At the same time, however – and this makes Jędrzejko's voice interesting for the present elaboration – micrology is defined by him as a philosophical stance. An interest in the detail as "the place where contemporary thematic criticism and traditional hermeneutics become intertwined; the semiotic together with the existential"[38] leads him to the conclusion that "micrology, emerging from the anxiety of the post-Derridean generation, was brought to life by the divergence between existence and discourse: joining – via emotions – the entitativity of the detail and its signage, micrology performs a bona fide interpretation, based on the philological honesty of 'learning the language' of a work and its period."[39]

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[33]More extensively on this topic, see: Crary, p. 70.

[34]Crary, p. 73.

[35]See H. Arendt, *The Human Condition*, Chicago 1958.

[36]P. Jędrzejko, "Oscylacje literackie, czyli od Gadamera do mikrologicznej krytyki świadomości" (Literary Oscillations, or, From Gadamer to the Micrological Critique of Consciousness), in *Mikrologia*, vol. 2.

[37]Ibid., p. 29.

[38]Ibid., p. 56.

[39]Ibid., pp. 55-56.

This idea of *bona fide*, the good faith with which the analysis of a work is carried out, shared by a significant number of the authors whose works appear in the successive volumes of *Mikrologia literacka*, edited by Aleksander Nawarecki, nonetheless obscures what seems to be the genuine innovation and opportunity of the "post-Derridean" perspective invoked by Jędrzejko: its fragility, provisorial nature, and – above all – immanent resistance to such fundamental categories as "the language of a work and its period," against whose usurping claims micropoetics stands in reading practice, as it stands against all kinds of generalizations, certainties and findings. Because micropoetics is, above all, a practice of reading. Let us repeat, a practice, not a theory. Micropoetics goes into textual particles, but also into the cracks between them, attempting to fathom what is unspoken and unspeakable. It is thus not exclusively an art of analysis, but rather, primarily, of interpretation.

In the extended essay "Czarna mikrologia"[40] (Black Micrology) that opens the fourth volume from the Silesian group of scholars, like its predecessors devoted to a variety of contexts, understandings and uses of the category of smallness in literary studies, Nawarecki likewise does not focus on method but on micrological sensitivity and aesthetics. That aesthetics is, for him, a minor, minute thing, an aesthetic of the vanishing world of the melancholic, the collector of scraps and seemingly useless things, important only in the perspective of an individual, single-use existence. The micrological approach is thus represented by the man who, like Adorno in his *Reflections on a Damaged Life*, written from the perspective of an intellectual and a Jew who survived the Holocaust, attempts to enunciate his own *Minima Moralia*.[41] It is the perspective of one whose own experiences and memory are anchored in the past and who gazes on the contemporary world as a heap of fragments and ruins, bearing witness to the impermanence of the world, the fragility and transitoriness of things. The signature of melancholy thus marks the workshop of the micrologist, because that which is small is not only fleeting but is also frequently overlooked, and only when it has been irreversibly lost becomes the object of tender adoration. Its existence is thus purely hypothetical, potential, until it is brought to the light of day by the penetrating gaze or thought of the micrologist, who nonetheless not only trusts his senses but avails himself of all available precision tools of dissection and analysis that allow him to name and authenticate whatever has hitherto been located beyond the horizon of existence and understanding.

Micrological poetics is, to some extent, a metaphysical poetics, and at the same time, a postsecular one, founded on the experience of loss, the loss of faith in the value of what cannot be directly expressed or captured in the rigor of syntax and logical argumentation. It is, to a significant measure, based on the belief that what is important is revealed in flashes, fleeting flickers, moments, endowed by the reader's attention with their full form. Attentiveness and concentration are meant to offer resistance to perceptions that are subject to the operations of mass media technologies, which Benjamin described already in the 1930s as proceeding in a state of distraction.[42]

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[40]A. Nawarecki, "Czarna mikrologia" (Black Micrology), in: *Skala mikro w badaniach literackich*, op. cit., pp. 9-24.

[41]T. Adorno, *Minima Moralia. Reflections on a Damaged Life*, trans. E. F. N. Jephcott, New York 2005.

[42]W. Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, translator uncredited, Scottsdale 2010.

In reality, the surplus of stimuli coming at us causes us to be less and less capable of perceiving; our reception of things and states is increasingly superficial, and we are increasingly desensitized to the signals that reach us. Micropoetics would therefore be a remedy to the disease of disintegrated postmodern subjectivity. A remedy applied with premeditation in defiance of what is forced on us by the contemporary online world: divisibility of attention, multitasking, speed in taking decisions and action.[43] Micropoetics pauses time, freezing it in a careful gaze that rushes into depth. It has no thought for the contemporary aesthetics of disappearance,[44] which in its velocity of images and things turns every detail into a distantly fading trail. It is the posture of a melancholic who looks out longingly for things to fill his lack, felt painfully amid inattentive people living in haste and shimmering images without depth.

The fancy for the micro scale reveals a desire to oppose great globalizing, generalizing and unifying processes. It contains a desire to save what is unrepeatable, what is one of a kind and one's own, because anxiety before nothingness, anonymity, and homogeneity gnaws at the contemporary mind. We thus seek a custom-made medicine for it: in the affirmation of the detail the trifle, in the fleeting sensation of something real. Only they, unnoticed by the casual eye and sensibility, give us a sense of the exceptional.

Micropoetics as an escape into smallness, into detail should nonetheless not postulate that since the whole cannot be grasped, it is then possible to isolate at least the smallest indivisible particle which we can observe. The literary microparticle is not an elementary particle like a quantum in physics or a point in mathematics. After the critical experience of deconstruction, no empirical attempts to exhaust the richness of the literary object or the ontological nature of that object, which represents an area of free play as it is understood in Derridean terms, will allow that goal to be accomplished. The micrologist's posture is precisely the result of the realization that we cannot possess full knowledge of the object of study, exhaustively describe it, or write out all possible versions of its interpretation.

That is why micropoetics is not an innovative method, as Ewelina Suszek[45] suggests in her discussion of Silesian micrology, nor is it a methodological fashion. It constitutes rather a reaction to the lost dream of modern literary studies, whose symbol was the structuralist project

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[43]The properties of perception in the online discourse of the computer science community has been described interestingly by Karol Piekarski in his doctoral thesis. See K. Piekarski, *Ekonomia percepcji. Mechanizmy selekcjonowania informacji w Internecie.* This doctoral dissertation was written under the guidance of Prof. Tadeusz Miczki, Katowice 2014, http://sbc.katowice.pl/Content/126980/doktorat3505.pdf, [accessed: 12. 02. 2017]. Here of particular relevance are the chapters devoted to changes in perception and the historical contexts of the phenomenon of information overload.

[44]I have borrowed the term "aesthetics of disappearance" from Paul Virilio (*Estetique de la disparition*, Paris 1980), whom in his work, repeatedly underscored the crucial importance, for progress, of speed, and its society-structuring role. Especially in relation to contemporary civilization, we can discuss the enormous acceleration that was embodied by the appearance of cinema. Cinematographic art, in Virilio's view, constitutes the quintessence of change, because it is in that area, as Krystyna Wilkoszewska notes, that "the shift took place from the aesthetic of material transmission of things and works toward the aesthetics of disappearance, because in film technique the faster things vanish, the more present they are" (K. Wilkoszewska, "Paula Virilio filozofia prędkości i estetyka znikania" [Paul Virilio's Philosophy of Speed and Aesthetics of Disappearance], *Kultura Współczesna* [Contemporary Culture] 1993, no. 1, p. 110).

[45]E. Suszek, *Moda na małe? Innowacyjność śląskiej mikrologii literackiej*, "Postscriptum Polonistyczne" 2016, nr 1(17), s. 179-191.

of interpretation as a hypothesis of a hidden totality. Micropoetics is also a conscious return to sources, richer for all the experiences acquired over the centuries – to the modest artisanal tasks of the philologist, who, in the rubble of the great systems, patiently rebuilds his small, provisory workshop, providing him with a fragile sense of reliability and a makeshift professionalism.

KEYWORDS

LITERARY STUDIES

postmodernity

ABSTRACT:

The article attempts to place micropoetics on the map of contemporary cultural phenomena and within the context of other areas of scholarship. The author treats micropoetics as a sub-jective quasi-method in scholarly literary studies, oriented toward detailed, in-depth analysis. She shows the traits that connect it with traditional philological scholarship, as well as what constitutes its innovative element: an individualized reading strategy, adapted to the object of analysis, an individualized approach to the work, and the self-consciousness of the scholar--micrologist, who takes a distanced view of his own judgments and is conscious of their si-tuational nature. The main distinguishing feature of micrology becomes, in her reading, its attentiveness, discussed here as a historically legitimate category.

m i c r o p o e t i c s

analysis

attention

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M i c r o p o e t i c s
and Video Games,
or a Minimalistic Encomium
to Short-sightedness

Piotr Kubiński

Wisława Szymborska's poem "Wszystko" (Everything) is an example of a work exceptionally filled with content.[1] On a first reading, the text appears to many readers to be a simple reflection on semantics, the meaning of words, the boundaries of language – and, by implication, the boundaries of knowledge. Those interpretations also frequently are the first to arise when I discuss the work with students. Often, only a more penetrating group analysis of the text allows them to perceive that this text is capable of generating meanings on a completely different level: a philosophical or existential one. And it often turns out that this short work, barely 28 words long (32 in the published English translation), stimulates such deep and rich interpretations that one class is not sufficient to have a satisfying discussion of it. Approached closer, the poem – seen in close-up, through a magnifying glass – expands and gives birth to new meanings.[2]

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[1] "Everything – / a bumptious, stuck-up word. / It should be written in quotes./ It pretends to miss nothing, / to gather, hold, contain, and have. / While all the while it's just / a shred of gale." Translated from Polish by Stanislaw Baranczak and Clare Cavanagh. In Szymborska *Monologue of a Dog*, New York 2006, p. 89.

[2] See e.g. E. Kasperski, *Współczesny neotranscendentalizm? (Wisława Szymborska: «Platon, czyli dlaczego»)* [in:] *Komparatystyka dzisiaj, vol. 2: Interpretacje*, ed. E. Kasperski, E. Szczęsna, Warszawa 2011.

We could obviously list many texts of this kind – and the list would not consist only of poems, either. The first chapter of *Lolita*, Vladimir Nabokov's prose masterpiece, might be a completely different (though again selected arbitrarily from a vast sea of other possibilities) example of such a text, which is particularly rewarding for close readings using the tools of literary studies (particularly during re-readings, taking the context of the whole work into account; in fact Nabokov himself declared that a true reading can never be the first reading of a book, but only begins with the second approach to the text[3]).

This article, however, deals neither with Szymborska nor Nabokov, nor literature as traditionally understood, but rather with digital texts, and in particular, video games. Is not the juxtaposition of poetry with video games a confusion of orders? An outrage against decorum? Do not studies of games – as one literary scholar recently asserted to me – grant unearned legitimacy to a purely commercial phenomenon?

To take such a radical position would seem to imply not only disregard for or even elimination of many years of scholarly practice (taking into consideration, for example, the tradition of the Tartu-Moscow School of Semiotics, which treated the category of "text" very broadly,[4] or the work of Roland Barthes on advertising texts[5]), but also imposing unjustified limit on the horizon of knowledge. There appear to be two fundamental causes leading to such an approach.

The first stems from belief in the legitimacy of maintaining a clear division between high culture (worthy of attention and reflection) and low culture (which according to this position should simply not be given consideration) and from the attribution to the latter of all manifestations of the ludic. In fact, however, Johan Huizinga in his classic work *Homo Ludens* showed that play is by nature culture-creating and is therefore not opposed to culture.[6] Furthermore, that Dutch scholar noted that play and games represent a space of true freedom, because no coercion is required to get people to engage in play (it would then cease to be play) nor can people be completely deprived of it (as witnessed by reminiscences of the Nazi concentration camps: even in those terrible places, play and games were an element in everyday life[7]). Huizinga's perception in play and games of a space of profound human freedom seems even weightier when we place *Homo Ludens* in its historical context – the book was published in 1938.

The second reason for this attitude seems to stem from the belief that works which generate important meanings worthy of reflection can only emerge through the media of chosen, time-honored semiotic systems – with the system of language at the top. It is true that even today, there is no way to question the privileged position of the word (specifically predisposed, as Barthes, among others, has observed, to comment on other systems and itself).

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[3] This concept of literature in fact is a direct outgrowth of Nabokov's authorial strategy, based on constant deception of the reader and playing games with him. See the afterword to *Lolita*.

[4] See Y. Lotman, *Universe of the Mind*, trans. Ann Shukman, New York 1990.

[5] See R. Barthes, *Rhetoric of the Image*, trans. Stephen Heath, London 1977.

[6] J. Huizinga, *Homo Ludens*, translator uncredited, Boston 1971.

[7] See *Commandant of Auschwitz: The Autobiography of Rudolf Hoess*, translator uncredited, New York 1961.

And yet the exclusion of games from the aggregate of media capable of generating texts susceptible to deeper interpretation can only result from lack of familiarity with the phenomenon at hand. Putting aside the stipulations by Huizinga mentioned above, assigning video games to the realm of commerce and intellectually undemanding entertainment must be seen as a groundless trivialization of them and a rash reduction of the genre to a single dimension, in which it undoubtedly fits but to which is not restricted. Cultural texts of this type can also be a space of artistic creation or an instrument of journalistic commentary on current events.[8] What is more, the aesthetics of games also influences works that are created in other media – particularly in the area of interactive art,[9] but also in literature.[10] Exclusion of games from the space of poetological (or, more broadly, humanities) reflection will not bring about better understanding of other manifestations of culture, but will rather hinder such understanding.

A problem very frequently encountered in discussions of video games is thus the failure to consider their enormous variety. In the same category labelled "video games" we place both simple games of manual coordination and logic such as *Tetris*[11] and narrative action games such as *Grand Theft Auto V*,[12] highly complex in terms of its mechanics of play as well as the content of its represented world. On the one hand, the sphere of digital games includes both textual games (meaning those that exclusively use a text interface, such as *Zork I: The Great Underground Empire*[13]) and those that relinquish the use of words entirely, relying purely on visual and aural signs (such as *Flow*[14]). Video games are both re-mediatizations of already existing analogue games (such as chess in its mobile computerized or tablet form) and formal experiments like *The Graveyard*[15] – a product which is an artistic search for the boundaries of medial forms of digital play (and which will be the main object of inquiry in the remainder of this article). Oppositions such as these, displaying the broad heterogeneity of games, could be multiplied ad nauseam. In the face of such great diversity of examples of the phenomenon we are interested in here, great care must be taken and restraint exercised when formulating generalized judgments.

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[8] I have previously tried to draw attention to this in my book *Gry wideo. Zarys poetyki* (Video Games. Outline of Poetics; Kraków 2016).

[9] On the subject of interactive art, see: R.W. Kluszczyński, *Sztuka interaktywna. Od dzieła-instrumentu do interaktywnego spektaklu* (Interactive Art: From the Work-Instrument to the Interactive Spectacle), Warszawa 2010; M. Krawczak, "Programowanie interakcji: software i sztuki performatywne" (The Programming of Interaction: Software and the Performative Arts), Didaskalia 5/2012.

[10] See e.g, M. Olesińska-Górska, "'Playable poetry' i gry komputerowe. Krytyczne negocjacje" ("Playable Poetry" and Computer Games. Critical Negotiations) [in:] *Olbrzym w cieniu. Gry wideo w kulturze audiowizualnej* (The Giant in the Shadows. Video Games in Audiovisual Culture), ed. A. Pitrus, Kraków 2012; A. Przybyszewska, *Liberackość dzieła literackiego* (The Liberating Aspect of the Literary Work), Łódź 2015.

[11] Tetris (Aleksiej Pażytnow and others, 1984).

[12] *Grand Theft Auto V* (Rockstar North, 2013).

[13] *Zork I: The Great Underground Empire* (Infocom, 1980).

[14] *Flow* (Thatgamecompany, 2006). At the same time, it should be stipulated that text appears in *Flow* in those parts of the work which – to paraphrase Gérard Genette's typology – could be called paratextual, and thus, for example, in the end credits.

[15] *The Graveyard* (Tale of Tales, 2008).

It should also be noted, in view of these stipulations, that the category of text acquires new properties in the digital medium, features absent in analogue texts (the properties of digital texts have been noticed by such scholars as Espen Aarseth, Lev Manovich and Markku Eskelinen). This fact forces the scholar to adopt a different interpretative strategy than in the case of non-digital works – a strategy which must take into account the specifics of the new reception situation, and therefore should consider such factors as interactivity, ergodicity, the performative character of the text's use or the immersive aspect of how it is experienced. In this context, the postulate set forth by Roberto Simanowski seems particularly important and relevant. The scholar of new media declares the need to construct a new hermeneutics within digital media, one that would take into account such factors as those indicated above ("we have to shift from a hermeneutics of linguistic signs to a hermeneutics of intermedial, interactive, and processing signs"[16]).

In the area of game studies, the answer to that need appears to consist of conducting close textual interpretations, focused on the detail and scrupulously catching significant nuances at various levels of cultural texts. Naturally, bringing the tools of poetics to bear on chess does not bring such satisfying results as, for example, in-depth analyses of narrative games (or even selected elements of such games). Yet on the other hand, as I have already demonstrated in a previous article in *Forum of Poetics*[17] – the tools developed by poetics can sometimes also be helpful for analyses of games not focused on aplot or even those not using linguistic signs. One example among many could be *Flower*,[18] in which a metaphor is developed "separately from the medium of language."[19] Poetological analysis can thus show itself to be useful not only where narrative games are concerned, but also for games featuring formal experimentation or aspiring to be works of art.

The game mentioned above entitled *The Graveyard* is in fact a splendid example for use in the context of this issue of *Forum of Poetics*, because it enables us to show how micropoetics can become an effective tool for studying video games. A study using micro scale is all the more appropriate here in that we are dealing with a very small cultural text – a kind of microtext, in fact. Whereas certain games demand several dozen hours of use or more to reach their final stage, it is possible to play an entire round of *The Graveyard* in a mere... few minutes. This is due to the game's structure having been developed by authors from the Belgian studio Tale of Tales.[20] In the game, the player identifies with an old woman visiting a graveyard.

[16]Roberto Simanowski, "What is and toward what end do we read digital literature?" [in:] *Literary Art in Digital Performance. Case Studies in New Media Art and Criticism*, ed. F.J. Ricardo, New York 2009, p. 14.

[17]"W stronę poetyki gier wideo" (Toward a Poetics of Video Games), trans. Tim Williams, *Forum of Poetics* 2/2016. http://fp.amu.edu.pl/please-translate-in-en_us-w-strone-poetyki-gier-wideo/ [accessed 16.05.2017].

[18]*Flower* (Thatgamecompany, 2009). [skoro podajemy link do anglojęzycznej wersji tekstu, to chyba tytuł też od razu trzeba podać angielski (z pominięciem polskiego)

[19]"W stronę poetyki gier wideo," *Forum Poetyki* 2/2016, p. 23.

[20]The founders of the studio and the main creators of several of its games are Aureia Harvey (from the US) and Michaël Samyn (from Belgium).

Ilustration no. 1. Screenshot from the game *The Graveyard* (Tale of Tales, 2008)

The player's operational possibilities are very limited in this game. He can only steer the gray-haired heroine and direct her through the graveyard street in order to lead her to a nearby bench located next to the chapel. The protagonist, who walks with a cane, moves very slowly, so that getting to the bench takes her at least a minute and a half – on condition that the player decides to go straight toward the chapel. There is no real reason for him to head in a different direction, because the side streets have no actions or interactions to offer. At the same time, when the woman enters there, the camera does not follow her, and the old woman eventually ceases to be in the centre of the frame – thus giving a clear signal that the side street selected by the player is not the right direction in which to be heading. When the woman reaches the bench, she can sit down on it – then, a moment later, music begins to play in the background, and next the words of a song telling about cleaning the graves (an English translation of the Dutch text is provided via subtitles); there then comes some in-camera editing, by means of the superimposition of one shot on another: a close-up of the woman's face superimposed on the image of her sitting on the bench, suggesting the scene's intimate, emotional meaning. At the same time, this simple montage procedure allows us to interpret the text of the song as an expression of the woman's personal situation. The listing of people who have died and the manner of their passing (and to a considerable extent, the lyrics of the song sung represent just such a list) may contain the stories of the people buried in the graveyard, or perhaps of the woman's loved ones.[21]

[21]On the topic of the song's content, see M. Samyn, *Postmortem: Tale of Tales' The Graveyard*, Gamasutra.com [available online at: www.gamasutra.com/view/feature/132258/postmortem_tale_of_tales_the_.php?].

Her portrait is long lost

Ilustration no. 2. Screenshot from the game *The Graveyard* **(Tale of Tales, 2008)**

When the song, which lasts nearly three minutes, comes to an end, nothing more remains for the player in this place. He can, if he wishes, stay there and contemplate the graveyard, listening to the sounds of birds and trees that dominate the scene. A more concrete action he can take, however, is to rise from the bench and go to the gate, so as to leave the graveyard (at which point the game is over). Importantly, the player can rise before the song ends (and then the song will go quiet for a moment); he can also turn around and go to the gate before he reaches the bench. Regardless of his decision, reaching the gate ends the game – and regardless of what action is taken, *The Graveyard* always ends the same way (there is no concrete result that would measure the scale of difficulty, nor is there any particular point). The difference in how the game plays out – and it is highly significant – appears when the player makes the decision to stop using the basic version of the game, available free of charge, and proceeds to purchase the full version. In the paid version, the old woman may, at a certain moment, die (depriving the player of subjectivity – a point to which I shall return in a later part of the article). In any case, all of the actions available in the game can easily run their course in a period of less than ten minutes.

In the course of a close text analysis, it is worth paying attention to various elements of the game, including the steering interface. I have already noted that the protagonist moves very slowly. We should also heed as relevant the way the player can cause the old woman to sit down on the bench. According to the conventions to which experienced players are accustomed, one push of the button responsible for interaction should be enough to issue an order to the avatar. After clicking on it, the player might expect the protagonist to immediately execute his command. However, the situation in *The Graveyard* is different – the player must approach the bench at a certain proximity and, holding the button down, cause the woman to turn her back to the bench; then, after a moment of waiting, she takes the seat by herself, when she is ready to do so.

Why do these minor subtleties in the design of interaction hold such significance? In view of how few forms of interaction the player has at his disposal. In fact, the only operations he can carry out are the following:

1. walking to the bench;
2. turning the protagonist's back to the bench, so that she can take her seat there;
3. getting up from the bench (while the song is still playing or after it ends);
4. walking back to the gate, leaving the graveyard and thereby ending the game (this can be done at any moment – also before walking to the bench).

Such a radical reduction of the scope of the player's influence on the world and the course of events should be seen as a very expressive authorial gesture and that is precisely why these few possibilities left to her/him should be very attentively examined – they are of singular importance. At the technical level, we might say that the game's interface is very slow and unresponsive, lacking any trace of the instantaneous: the old woman reacts to the player's commands with palpable delay, moves significantly more slowly than the typical protagonist of a video game whose action is seen from a third-person point of view (the perspective in which the camera is set behind the character's back is typical of, for example, action games). The arduous walk to the bench, during which "nothing happens," is hardly riveting – nor is it intended to be. Similarly, the moment of the woman's turning around in front of the bench lasts long enough that less patient players may even get irritated.

All of these procedures based on taking away the player's causative agency – and on endowing the actions he does undertake with a palpably laborious and unhurried quality – correspond to the theme of the game and the status of its main character. There is no denying that her main distinguishing characteristic is, after all, her advanced age. In video games we rarely take on the personae of people who are elderly and whose agency or mobility is thereby limited. In the case of *The Graveyard* it is precisely those attributes that become the main subject of the game. Crucially, this happens not only at the level of linguistic text (the words of the song), aesthetics (the black and white filter) and accessories and props (the graveyard, the chapel, the cane). The game thematizes the problem of old age at the level of the interface as well – the lack of instantaneousness and the need to use a slow avatar constitute a certain kind of equivalent to the experience of old age, which the authors have here identified primarily with limited agency and the resistance of one's own body, its lack of agility. At the same time, it is worth noting that the course of play presented in *The Graveyard* resembles a story more than it does a game – having as it does an end and a beginning, but no talk of a situation of victory or defeat. The game does not present any result to which the player might feel attached (not surprising, given that we do not encounter any difficulties or challenges in the game). Of course, it is true that in the paid version of the game there is a kind of ending in the death of the protagonist – but it is hard to say whether arriving at such an ending represents a failure or a win. In the context of the production as a whole and in the context of the player's lack of influence on the protagonist's condition, death here appears to be simply nature running its course. In this sense, it is a view of death opposite to the one action games usually invoke.[22]

[22]For more on this topic, see: H. Strużyna, A. Strużyna, "Wyjątkowość doświadczenia śmierci w artystycznych grach wideo" (The Exceptional Nature of the Experience of Death in Artistic Video Games), *Replay. The Polish Journal of Game Studies* 02/2015.

We thus deal in *The Graveyard* with a peculiar kind of reduction of:

1. the player's causative agency;
2. the instantaneous nature of the functioning of the interface;
3. typical video game elements (the elimination of challenges and, especially, a result in which one could be invested).

The creators at the Tale of Tales studio have turned this reduction into their trademark, programmatic creative method. They refer to their games as "notgames." According to their own explanation, the idea is based on:

> The idea is to explore the potential of digital entertainment and art that is not games. By explicitly rejecting the typical game elements of rules and goals and challenges and rewards, we hope to discover new ways to delight and enlighten our audience. Ways that give us more freedom in terms of choice of subject matter and emotional response.[23]

It should also be noted that the authors' apparent rupture with the tradition of digital entertainment consists not of turning their backs on it, but rather deliberately overturning it, standing in opposition to it. That is simultaneously a gesture intended, on the one hand, to be a critique of games in their previously existing popular form, and on the other to inscribe Harvey and Samyn's experiment in the space of art. This intention is also demonstrated by the description of the game located at the company's official page, where *The Graveyard* is defined as an "experiment with real-time poetry, with storytelling without words."[24]

This article is not the proper place for discussion of the utility of "notgames" as a category, though such a discussion is an important and necessary one.[25] At the same time, it seems that the category itself arose more as an element of a peculiar kind of creative manifesto than as an attempt to propose a precise academic tool. Regardless of these reservations, *The Graveyard* is a game that deserves to be treated as an eloquent case study for micropoetological analysis. In relation to this production, we could even use the category of close playing, devised by analogy to the tradition of close reading[26] – such close scrutiny of a game and intense playing of the game would be characterized primarily by treating the object of study with full seriousness and philological precision, while at the same time taking into account the work's many levels. It is worth noting that in the case of *The Graveyard*, the gesture discussed above of weakening the player's subjectivity is so conspicuous and meaningful that in many people's interpretations it pushes the text of the song (which takes up half of the length of the game!) into the background. The melic work contained in the game is often reduced to the level of the occurrences in the game themselves (the text of the song is not analyzed) or even

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[23]A. Harvey, M. Samyn, *Over Games*, 2010 [text available online at: http://tale-of-tales.com/tales/OverGames.html].

[24]There is a description of the game at http://tale-of-tales.com/TheGraveyard/.

[25]For more on this topic see e.g. P. Schreiber, "Eksperymentalne komputerowe gry tekstowe lat 90. a ruch 'notgames'" (Experimental Textual Computer Games of the '90s and the "notgames" Movement), Homo Ludens 1/2014.

[26]The term "close playing" is used by Espen Aarseth, who treats it as simply a term for studying individual games (making case studies): E. Aarseth, "I fought the law: Transgressive play and the implied player," *Situated Play, Proceedings of DiGRA 2007 Conference*, Tokyo 2007, p. 131.

completely ignored (this is understandable to a certain extent, since the authors themselves define the game as storytelling without words, as if the fabric of language were not relevant here – though that is clearly not the best interpretative strategy to take).

At the same time, such an approach, involving a short-sighted reading of the game and play-ing of it, can constitute a valuable point of departure for comparative analyses. Because on the basis of that reading, a comparison can be made of how old age can be thematised and conceptualized within games and other texts of culture. To experience a feeling of powerless-ness and related frustration was made possible in *The Graveyard* through the negation of the fundamental element in video games represented by the player's activities and his influence on the final shape of what happens in the game. What was thus rejected was the very factor that determines the peculiar nature of games and their poetics. In this case an extremely minimalistic game design – and thus the most basic fabric of the game – created the space for the maximalization of meaning.

Keywords | Abstract | Note on the Author ● ● ●

KEYWORDS

NOTE ON THE AUTHOR:

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ABSTRACT:

The article demonstrates the need to construct a new hermeneutics in the area of digital media. According to the author, the answer to this need within game studies consists of executing close textual interpretations, concentrated on detail and scrupulously grasping significant nuances at various levels of such cultural texts. As examples of digital texts particularly susceptible to such analysis, he refers not only to narrative games but also games experimental in form and aspiring to be works of art, such as *The Graveyard by Tale of Tales*.

Object and Accommodation – On Poetic Syntax in Contemporary Polish Poetry

(a case study of nominal function)

Krzysztof Skibski

na stole stoi woda w garnuszku

a może garnuszek z wodą

(garnuszek wody?)

[...]

(on the table stands water in a pot / or perhaps a pot with water / (a pot of water?))

Tadeusz Różewicz, "Woda w garnuszku, Niagara i autoironia"

(Water in a Pot, Niagara and Self-Irony)

(in *Zawsze fragment* [Always Fragment], Wrocław 1996, p. 65)

This article will deal with studies of the problem of poetic syntax in free (non-numeric) verse. The specifics of this perspective result primarily from the possibilities presented by a verse form with a positive definition of the poem as a text composed of potentially free-standing lines (syntagmatic chains) entering into semantic and syntactic relations within the work as a whole.[1] Rhythmic, versificatory or structural regularity are additional parameters poten-

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[1] This question relates to how we formulate the category of a poem – if linearity is merely a feature implied by the act of reading, then the poem's spatiality is maximized. Some important points related to the specifics of free verse as formulated here can be found in works by Artur Grabowski (*Wiersz. Forma i sens* [Poem. Form and Sense], Kraków 1999) and Witold Sadowski (*Wiersz wolny jako tekst graficzny* [Free Verse as Graphic Text], Kraków 2004). Dorota Urbańska has made an acute analysis of the category, with emphasis on the relationship between graphic and syntagmatic parameters (*Wiersz wolny. Próba charakterystyki systemowej* [Free Verse, An Attempt at Systematic Description], Warszawa 1995; see also *Wiersz wolny: geneza i ewolucja do 1939 r.* [Free Verse: Genesis and Evolution up to 1939], ed. L. Pszczołowska and D. Urbańska, Warszawa 1998).

tially defining a text but which do not constitute obligatory features of a poem.[2] The relations that develop among the units of a text (its lines) result from the spatial structure of the text, whose constitutive elements include linear orders of syntagmatic units together with their syntactic relations as well as all types of connections between elements of the text's language in their actual relations in the text as linguistic functions. This means that in the analysis to follow, many factors that define the properties of linguistic elements of the poetic text (e.g. factors of textual cohesion, elements of style, the referential values of lexical units, and so on) will be considered. It is worthwhile to underscore that the approach proposed here is stylistic in nature, and therefore (in keeping with the tradition of such studies) is situated on the borderline between linguistics and literary studies.[3]

Elementary Assumptions – *table, water in a pot*

The essentials of grasping poetic syntax thus have their motivation in the method of treating a poem as a peculiar kind of textual structure in its reception. The maximal intensity of such phenomena is free verse, and therefore – let us remember – a text consisting of lines with a certain semantic and syntactic autonomy. Limiting this autonomy is closely tied conventional ways of building linear texts – to punctuation, spelling and the grammatical dependencies of accommodated conjunctions (in a certain sense, also to the phenomenon of connectivity, which is perhaps most clearly visible in the case of phraseological conjunctions as discontinuous units).

Poetic syntax differs from typical linear predicative orders in that lines, as definite syntactic and semantic modules, can create spatial and non-uniform relations with other (not necessarily consecutive) lines of text,[4] which does not impair the poem's cohesion and does not

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[2] The discussion of the essence of free verse has, from this perspective, its own tradition and dynamics in the study of versification in Poland, as reconstructed by Dorota Urbańska (*Wiersz wolny...*), and has been demonstrated in a broader perspective of the history of Polish poetry by Lucylla Pszczołowska in her book *Wiersz polski: zarys historyczny* (Polish Poetry: A Historical Outline), Wrocław 1997. See also: A. Okopień-Sławińska, *Wiersz nieregularny i wolny Mickiewicza, Słowackiego, Norwida* (Irregular and Free Verse of Mickiewicz, Słowacki,and Norwid), Warszaw 1964.

[3] The relevance of the stylistic scholarship of Teresa Dobrzyńska in this context cannot be overestimated (see e.g. *Od słowa do sensu. Studia o metaforze* [From Word to Sense. Studies in Metaphor], Warszawa 2012 and *Tekst poetycki i jego konteksty: zbiór studiów* [The Poetic Text and its Contexts: A Collection of Studies], Warszawa 2015), as well as related work by other scholars including Teresa Skubalanka (e.g. *Wprowadzenie do gramatyki stylistycznej języka polskiego* [Introduction to the Stylistic Grammar of Polish Language], Lublin 2000, *Język poezji Czesława Miłosza* [The Language of Czesław Miłosz'sPoetry], Lublin 2006, *Herbert, Szymborska, Różewicz: studia stylistyczne* [Herbert, Szymborska, Różewicz: Stylistic Studies], Lublin 2008), Aleksandra Okopień-Sławińska (2000), Anna Pajdzińska (e.g. *Frazeologizmy jako tworzywo poezji współczesnej* [Phraseologisms as Material of Contemporary Poetry], Lublin 1993, and many studies and essays contained in the series of volumes known as the Lublin red books), Elżbieta Dąbrowska (*Pejzaż stylowy nowej literatury polskiej* [The Stylistic Landscape of New Polish Literature], Opole 2012) and Barbara Greszczuk (*Polska poezja współczesna: studia stylistyczno-językowe* [Contemporary Polish Poetry: Stylistic-Linguistic Studies], Kielce 2015).

[4] This property of free verse was illuminated by Stanisław Balbus, who several decades ago demonstrated the phenomenon of syntactic simultaneity. In discussing cases of text which "cannot phonically be realized," Balbus explains that: "their systems are only seemingly linear, strictly speaking – only their spatial order of presentation is linear; the acoustic, temporal order, on the other hand, is to a certain extent vertical in nature. In other words, the situational structure of the utterance assumes a simultaneity of enunciation of individual segments which in the visual record occur consecutively." ("Graficzny inwariant tekstu literackiego" [The Graphic Invariant of the Literary Text], in: *O języku literatury* [On the Language of Literature], ed. J. Bubak, A. Wilkoń, Katowice 1981, p. 234). Among particular types of phenomena (which he illustrates with poetic examples) Balbus differentiated between multi- and uni-vocal syntactic simultaneity. This article will strive primarily to underscore multivocal simultaneity, though it differs from tabularity (see subsequent footnote) in its form of capturing the spatiality of the poetic text, and by the same token – in the syntagmatic functionality of the interlineal relations.

cause the invalidation of the interlinear syntactic relations indicated in a linear reading. There is thus an assumption that modular (tabular)[5] meaning-generation is an immanent feature of free verse – it represents a component of the positive definition of this type of textual form.

Syntactic accommodation is here understood according to the criteria of Saloni and Świdziński, and relates to every kind of dependent relation between syntactic syntagmas or formulations; at the same time, it may also refer to either components of a line's syntagma or lines in their entirety – as accommodated units.[6] This circumstance provides the basis for separating a group of poetic phenomena, i.e., phenomena strictly dependent on the specifics of the poetic utterance that renders the line functional as a category of meaning in the text.

Formulations of Accommodation – *a pot with water*

We can thus imagine a reflection on the subject of objects[7] and accommodations at the meta--level, i.e. a consideration of the relations among lines in terms of textual accommodation.[8] We would then be dealing with an analysis of dependencies arising among line-objects (themes[9]) in the text and the study of their possible coordination or subordination, forms of association (conjunctions, pronouns, punctuation marks) and an analysis of cohesion at the level of coherence. It is also possible, however – and it will in fact be the essential task of this article – to discuss the question of a certain group of nominal elements in the context of free verse, and thus examine relations with reference to the things (objects or categories) contained in a text. It is possible to adopt a premise, according to which lineal relationality can – in certain grammatical situations – be closely linked to the textual functions of nominal units: nouns, by virtue of their potential syntactic multifunctionality, can (depending on the construction of the poem) take on functions in the structure of a text beyond their syntactic role. If those roles are not mutually exclusive (as can happen as a result of a poem's particular order), such

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[5] The author has examined the question of tabularity and its influence on the reception of poetry (and thus, in this case, on the functioning of intratextual relations in free verse) in a separate article. Differences in the perception of interlineal relations with regard to simultaneity and tabularity could be formulated with reference to the space of the text. Drawing on the views expressed by Stanisław Balbus, we may educe the idea of tabularity, but only in a situation where we assume that the text of a free verse poem is primarily visual. Vocal interpretation in this case constitutes one of the components of the poem's semantic potency and results from the reader's interpretative adjudications (see K. Skibski, *Tabularność wiersza wolnego i jej konsekwencje lekturowe* [The Tabularity of Free Verse and its Consequences for Reading], *Poznańskie Studia Polonistyczne. Seria Językoznawcza* [Poznań Polish Studies, Linguistics Series] vol. 20(40) 2013, pp. 75 –92).

[6] See Z. Saloni, M. Świdziński, *Składnia współczesnego języka polskiego* (Syntax of Contemporary Polish Language), Warszawa 1998, pp. 108 –123.

[7] The synonymous nature of the terms "rzeczy – obiekty, przedmioty" (things, objects) in colloquial language has been noted by Teresa Dobrzyńska ("Rzeczy w poetyckich obrazach" [Things in Poetic Images], in *Tekst poetycki i jego konteksty: zbiór studiów*, Warszawa 2015, pp. 109-127), who adds: " [...] though these objects exist as forms of physical existence and have in some measure guaranteed objective existence, at the same time many of them reveal a dependency on certain cultural practices and have distinct anthropological features: they are perceived from a typically human perspective" (p. 110). This dependency on cultural practices can here also be understood with reference to linguistic practice, thereby joining communicative standards (and therefore the syntax of a typical, repeatable utterance) to the space of the analysis of artistic language.

[8] In this formulation textual accommodation is understood as the mutual adaptation of extemporaneous lineal syntagmas to the syntactic demands of relational lines (i.e. those that coordinate with them to produce the poetic text). The phenomenon may also involve a change of syntactic functions or a modification of the hierarchy of component elements in hypotactic or paratactic constructions.

[9] This refers to themes in various relations with rhemes, as well as to the unstable roles of the parts of a poetic work in a thematic-rhematic structure undergoing repeated instances of reception.

an object can have a complicated referentiality from a reception perspective, and thus have a variety of properties at the level of meaning.[10]

Let us take the quoted passage from a poem by Tadeusz Różewicz, in which both problems, the specific relationality of accommodated lines and the multifaceted nature of the category of object expressed in a poem, feature as the inspiration for such an examination. The relative and in some sense accommodated function of the object shows that the reception task is strictly motivated by the grammar of the subject's utterance. The profile, image construction, and finally, the model of conceptualization are all effects dependent on the grammar of the text. All three images and relations that occur in the passage from Różewicz's poem relate to these same basic categories as the result of a socially approved categorization (*pot*, *water*), but they differ in terms of their dependency on syntagmatic relations, which become essentially a signal of interpretation (conceptualization). Such a conceptualization may also, as can be seen in the quoted text, refer to typicality, and it can (for example by confronting different thematic-rhematic formulations) bear the mark of poetic accommodation. In this case, however, syntax operates with the greatest force because the relations between the text's lexical elements also translate clearly into the relations between the objects to which the text refers. They are thus both simple constructions that activate standardized properties of lexical units and also hybrid metaphorical constructions, juxtaposing in new arrangements various objects, often ones belonging to different categories.

We shall concentrate on things, given the transparency of that type of example, the operational nature of nominal units as facts differentiated in description, and also due to the polysemic properties of the lexeme "accommodation."[11] This latter factor in fact means that a vessel in some kind of relationship with water (in Różewicz's poem) becomes a cognitive riddle and simultaneously a testament to the enormous interpretative potential contained in the individual utterance (regardless of whether it is half-full or half-empty).

Defined in such terms, the phenomenon also naturally represents a kind of limitation. That, however, gives us a chance to show the problem of poetic syntax by looking at some fairly simple formulations. Nouns defining objects or category-objects, due to their syntactic relations, construct a described space and are a point of reference for complicated processes of the subject's self-expression in a text.[12] We should therefore – if only by means of the

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[10]Elsewhere Dobrzyńska writes: "The creation of things should here be understood not only as the production of material objects, such as the manufacture of tools or decorations, but also as the differentiation, understood as broadly as possible, of separate existences, the endowment of them with separateness and inclusion in broader systems dependent on scenarios of human behaviours." ("Rzeczy…," p. 112).

[11]See http://sjp.pwn.pl/doroszewski/akomodacja, http://wsjp.pl/index.php?id_hasla=54735&ind=0&w_szukaj=akomodacja (accessed: 15.01.2016).

[12]Anna Pajdzińska has drawn attention to some important aspects of profiling in language, with regard to poetic texts ("Profilowanie w tekście poetyckim" (Profiling in the Poetic Text), in: *Profilowanie w języku i w tekście* (Profiling in Language and Texts), ed. J. Bartmiński and R. Tokarski, Lublin 1998). She writes about the relationship of the writer to the language in which he expresses himself: "An artist often faces the necessity of finding a linguistic shape for content that has not yet been conventionalized, that cannot be expressed using existing linguistic units and their typical combinations. But he only has at his disposal – aside from some exceptional situations – the symbolic structures of his language. Like it or not, he must base his work on knowledge previously assimilated in the language, common to all users of that language, must start out from a culturally interpreted image of the world, provided in the meanings of lexical units, in the formation of (semi-) lexical groups, finally, in grammatical categories" (p. 343).

example of objects shown in poetry – examine the phenomenon of special accommodation. An object precisely defined by its functions and syntactic relations (dependencies) also acquires important traits that define it in context, though that results from a particular kind of implication.[13]

An object is here understood as a category differentiated by its name (in noun form), in relation to which the subject's utterance is constructed. The object is therefore grasped lexically, i.e. with the assumption of a typical, systematic referentiality. For example, "biurko" (writing-desk) is numbered among the group of objects, and as a noun is attributed certain possible syntactic functions (subject, object, predicate or noun in apposition). Those functions precisely are meaning-generating, because the construction of the poem assumes the possibility of disrupted linearity (or retardative linearity). In relation to that, the name of the object (for example in its dependent form) can be the only element of the line through which to refer to its lexical potentiality, while in relation it can become part of the group of subject, object or complex predicate. It can also invoke typical (and phraseological) connectivity, and create astonishing connections in relations – for example genitive connections, which often significantly modify the grammatical relations of components through the parallel status of mutual definition.[14]

In this context accommodation is a "figure of sense" – it does not constitute merely a possibility of grammar but is also a conceptual operation, whose meaning in terms of reception is close to another lexical meaning of accommodation, i.e., the adaptation of something to the perceptual possibilities of the receiver of the text. Such adaptation has the value of condensation, because the use of a word with, for example, a double, dynamic function motivated by an interlineal relation signifies its complicated reception, its interpretation in view of both functions in time, while at the same time none of the orders of reading is subject to nullification (in view of that retardative linearity).

The Illustration of Dependency – *a pot of water*

It is worth examining a few examples, which also have the purpose of illustrating the nuances of the process of building an interpretation in relation to an analysis of elements of poetic language. First, let us examine a work by Krzysztof Siwczyk:

[13]These implications relate mostly to untypical referentiality, which – where poetry is concerned – is an exceptionally complicated phenomenon (see e.g. E. Bińczyk, *Obraz, który nas zniewala. Współczesne ujęcia języka wobec esencjalizmu i problemu referencji* [The Image that Enslaves Us. Contemporary Analyses of Language in terms of Essentialism and the Problem of Referentiality], Kraków 2007). Poetic accommodation signifies the need to negotiate meanings, because it sanctions innovative relations, which often demand multiple readings – a change of function in the space of a text (instability of syntactic roles as well as categories) determines the need, in interpreted poetic worlds, the need for repeated confrontation of a reading with ordinary language. That language in this case is perceived through the prism of repeated expressions and of the kind of categorization that includes definition of predicative orders in typical utterances.
It becomes an intriguing question, when thinking of accommodation in these terms, what role pronouns and conjunctions play in poetry; those problems will, however, be developed in another article.

[14]On the topic of this view of equal status among parts in genitive metaphors, see, for instance, Piotr Wróblewski in his work *Struktura, typologia i frekwencja polskich metafor* (Structure, Typology and Frequency of Polish Metaphors; Białystok 1998).

Konkrety i idee (*Emil i my* [Emil and Us], Czarne 1999, p. 33)

Chociaż cytuje samo siebie i
rozumie się samo przez się,
<u>ciało</u>

<u>w rzeczy samej</u>, to przecie <u>rzecz jasna</u>,
że nie zgadza się gasnąć,
<u>za nic w świecie</u>.

(**Hard Facts and Ideas**. Though I quote myself myself and / understand myself through by myself, / the body / in itself, after all, clearly, / does not agree to be extinguished / not for anything in the world.)

The semantic consequences of the poem are immediately apparent at the lexical level. This happens due to the typical exposition of the object (*ciało* [the body]), which becomes a factor modifying the relational lines placed between the others, composed of phraseological units. The concentration of the text's structure on the noun "ciało" has the primary effect of creating a two-track interpretation of the fixed combinations of words, as well as endowing them with a completely new shared semantic feature. "Ciało w rzeczy samej" (the body / in itself) – thus not a human being, only part of it, perhaps deprived of life, here represents therefore a way of formulating both the peculiar nature of matter considered discretely (tissues, organs, appearance, function), and a certain regularity, principle or rule (in the phraseological sense). What happens with the next phraseologism, which in addition enters into a relation with the two-tracked aspect of the first combination, is similar. "Ciało – rzecz jasna" constitutes, on the one hand, the consequence of formulating the object as an unquestioned phenomenon – a paradoxically autotelic and simultaneously dependent one ("oczywiście – w rzeczy samej"), corresponding to the relational (in the context of the body) previous line "rozumie się samo przez się"; while on the other hand, "rzecz jasna" (clearly; literally: a clear thing) means this is positive, good, wonderful. It is worth noticing that both interpretations of "rzecz jasna" have their own characteristic reference. The first, signifying obviousness, is, in a literal reading, a combination of a noun and a defining adjective placed after it. This order has a generic function. The second interpretation, however, is linked to the archaic form "przecie" (here translated as "after all"), which aside from typical meanings (clear/bright, ergo good, cheerful, joyful, clean) allows us to refer as well to an older meaning of the Polish word "jasny," i.e., a term of servile deference equivalent to "honored" (e.g. "my honoured master"), referring to aristocratic birth, but there is also the meaning as in "clear as a bell" (obvious).[15] All of these partial meanings represent an intensification of a special way of precisely defining bodies. The metonyic implications (once we include the older iteration of the phraseologism, i.e. clear as a bell) cause, first of all, a change in the scope of accommodation at the level of the internal syntax of the lines, and thus the semantic double-tracking of the phraseologisms; and secondly, motivate the multifaceted understanding of looking at the body – as the object and subject of an utterance. A characteristic feature of this formulation, as well, is the conclusion of the text, where we see the body (not

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[15]See the note on the word in the *Słownik języka polskiego* (Dictionary of Polish Language) edited by W. Doroszewskiego (1958-1969): http://sjp.pwn.pl/doroszewski/jasny;5435899.html (accessed: 15.01.2017).

agreeing to expire) "za nic w świecie" (not for anything in the world). Also, the final line submits to a two-track reading as a result of the exposition of the many different roles of the category of the body in the text. "Za nic w świecie" is a unit that signifies "under no circumstances, never" but here also conveys "za nic" (for nothing), i.e., not receiving anything in this world or (not agreeing to expire – and lose clarity) without any reward or compensation in this world.

In Siwczyk's poem, the body is a separate object that deceptively implies the human being (not vice versa). This special change of roles is reflected in the functioning of phraseological combinations. We should, however, underscore that the typical readings have not been invalidated by this one – they function by virtue of the pre-existing context. Similarly, the lexical meaning of the body here represents an integral semantic value of all constructed metonymies, and thus of the entire textual metaphor.

From the point of view of poetic syntax, we are dealing here with a change in function – an integral part of the phraseologism becomes (as a result of play with the meanings of its lexical components) a synonym or meronym of the noun. Because of that, a peculiar kind of discussion goes on throughout the whole text between the concrete (image) and the idea, from which there emerges the image of the body-thing – an object that does not submit to easy categorization (due to the implied human being).

Another type of procedure built on lineal relationality, in which accommodation can be investigated at both of the levels mentioned above, is the recontextualization of the noun in the form of a genitive metaphor. The category of noun exhibited at the end of the line acquires (by force of the syntagmatic relationship within the line) a certain potential semantic value (resulting from typical referentiality motivated additionally by lineal cohesiveness, and thus at the level of cohesion), which is next further defined in a process of interlineal accommodation. Let us look now at two examples from a poem by Mariusz Grzebalski:

> **Radość** (*Pocałunek na wstecznym* [A Kiss in Reverse], Wrocław 2007, p. 20)

> Raptem życie zmienia się w radość,
> dni płyną <u>bezszelestnie jak kursywa</u>
> <u>chmur w pogodną noc</u>, choć
> za oknami kwitnie już pierwsze
> graffiti chłodu i miasto zbroi się
> w popiele i ugry. [...]

> [...]

> W tej podróży czekają nas wyłącznie
> niespodzianki, choć będzie krótka
> jak błysk flesza w zatoce oka.
> <u>Tymczasem usta przyjmują podarunek</u>
> <u>ust</u>, śmiech płynie rynną ulicy
> jak wiosenny deszcz.

(**Joy.** Suddenly life turns to joy, / days flow noiselessly like the cursive / of clouds on a night of fine weather, though / through the windows there already blooms the first / graffiti of cold and the city arms itself / in ashes and ochres. [...] [...] On this journey await us only / surprises, though it will be short / like the glimmer of a flash-bulb in a gulf of the eye. / At the same time the mouth accepts the gift / of a mouth, laughter flows in the gutter of the street / like a spring rain.)

The description of the abrupt change of life into joy occurs in the second line – "dni płyną bezszelestnie" like writing in a hurry[16] – like cursive, written in a flowing hand. The deployment of this noun enables the intensification of unitary referentiality, which – in terms of local cohesiveness – evokes the Latin *cursiva littera* (in Polish, "kursywa" also means "italics"). The lack of punctuation shows this line's openness to interlineal relations – the next line begins with a noun in genitive plural form (*chmur*) connected to the previous word in the form of a genitive expression with metaphorical value – *kursywa chmur*. The comparison thus developed – the days flow noiselessly like the cursive of clouds in a night of fine weather – creates an utterly new way of constructing an image in terms of a semantically interdependent construction (the clouds are writing hurriedly in the sky, the clouds are cursive in the sky), and also a bracket in between the contrasting categories ("dni płyną jak [...] w pogodną noc").

A relationship occurs in a similar fashion in another passage of the text – "Tymczasem usta przyjmują podarunek / ust." The positioning of the noun "podarunek" attracts the reader's attention with its formal similarity to and therefore implication of the word "pocałunek" (a kiss, which intuitively suggests itself as the offering accepted by the mouth). Through this implication, the grammatical cohesiveness of the line, which nonetheless is not closed by a punctuation mark, is reinforced. The relationship with the noun that begins the next line indicates another combination using the genitive case, "podarunek ust." The implication mentioned above remains active, though in this case the strong metonymy capable of simply implying identification, the relationship of two individuals who are each other's equals, cannot be overlooked (mouth 1 and mouth 2: the mouth is a gift for the mouth or the mouth conveys a gift to the mouth); it may also evoke the virtual phraseologism[17] "z ust do ust" (from mouth to mouth).[18]

Both of the textual situations presented here relate to the special duality that results from the two ways of examining accommodation in a poem. The first (following the order of their presentation in this article) concerns interlineal relations (and thus cohesiveness in the global sense), while the second involves functionalization of nouns in variable textual situations (local

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[16]See http://sjp.pwn.pl/doroszewski/kursywa;5445196.html (accessed: 15.01.2016).

[17]The term "virtual phraseologism" refers to the works of Wojciech Chlebda on phrasematics (see *Elementy frazematyki. Wprowadzenie do frazeologii nadawcy* (Elements of Phrasematics. Introduction to thePhraseology of the Sender; Opole 1991). This problem has been addressed in the course of studies of the category of the phraseological trace in such works as J. Studzińska and K. Skibski's "Frazeologizmy Wisławy Szymborskiej w przekładzie. Propozycja kategorii śladu frazeologicznego" (Wisława Szymborska's Phraseologisms in Translation. A Proposal for the Category of the Phraseological Trace; *Przestrzenie Teorii* [The Space of Theory] 25, 2016, pp. 149 –175). A virtual phraseologism is a unit evoked in reading a literary text under the influence of the signals of the phraseological – elements in the text which refer to a socially stabilized form of permanent phrasal union (in the normative or descriptive sense).

[18]"Z ust do ust" – "being directly transmitted to many consecutive individuals" http://wsjp.pl/index.php?id_hasla=20118&ind=0&w_szukaj=ust. (accessed: 15.01.2016).

in relation to grammatical cohesiveness). It should here be underscored that all semantic values which are activated in the course of such readings enrich an interpretation of the text aimed (as the task of the reader) at constructing an interpretative project. It is then dependent on the linguistic phenomena which determine meanings at various levels of the text's organization. They can designate stylistic dominants in the text, but in any case do not render invalid the multiplicity which – as we could have demonstrated earlier with a basic analysis – constitutes a peculiar feature of non-numeric poetry. Each aspect of spatiality in the structure of a poem has consequences in the semantics of a poetic work, the operations of which are connected with the various possible forms of accommodation (in relation to the category of nouns) only as basic evidence.

Let us examine one other example, which to some extent joins the problems relating to phraseological units[19] and those relating to independent noun categories. This type of combination can be found in, for example, the following text by Krzysztof Karask:

> **Wyznanie** (*Święty związek* [Holy Union], Wrocław 1997, p. 51)
>
> Wylewny język mojej młodości
> i suchy klekot języka moich lat dojrzałych
> stają przede mną jak dwie strony ciała
> które ryba miecza
> przecięła na pół; <u>dwie połowy jabłka</u>
> <u>które uwięzło w gardle; dwa końce kija</u>
> <u>który bije w ustach</u>; kołatka trędowatego
> która śpiewa: tak-nie
> nie-tak
>
> *
>
> Z kijem w ustach
> z niebem w twarzy
> podpiera ten kostur krajobrazu
> który otwiera we mnie coraz to nową ranę.
>
> 9 XII 1989
>
> (**Confession.** The effusive language of my youth / and the dry rattle of the language of my mature years / stand before me like two sides of a body / which a swordfish / has cut in two; two halves

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[19]Here we could cite the thesis that claims phraseologisms to be a kind of syntactic condensations, i.e., constructions containing in themselves (as lexical units) defined relations among components (described in the theory of phraseology using the phenomenon of inner syntax). Condensation in this case would refer to semantic-syntagmatic relations, as a result of which what is connoted is the total meaning of the union. The grammatical structure of that union is not, however, resistant to relations with contexts (in varous formal and significative formulations), in relation to which such a union can (as a cluster of meanings with a definite complex form) function as a part of an utterance in which it is included (by virtue of external syntax). Syntactic condensation thus here expresses itself in the presence of the internal phraseological syntactic-semantic structure, which can also define relations of this type in the broader context of the poem. Mixed relations and stabilized connotations of meaning are then possible, but also actualized.

of an apple / that got stuck in a throat / two ends of a stick / that hits in the mouth; the knock of a leper / who sings: yes-no / no-yes/ * / with a stick in the mouth / with heaven in the face / it bolsters that stick of a landscape / that opens up in me an ever new wound.)

In the text the dissimilarity of the language of youth and the language of mature years has created, in the text, a basis for dichotomous representation. The duality thus also organizes the presentation of categories of nouns, whose description is revealed to be the tension between the whole (two halves) and the split in two. Here the duality also has, however, a formal value, because it is connected with the relationality of lines, and with the double-tracking in fixed word combinations (of two types). In the first designated line that is the lexicalized metaphor of the two halves of an apple, which constitutes a definition of an ideal relationship between two people, individuals joined together in a lasting, harmonious bond. The next line, preceded by a comma, begins with a relative pronoun indicating the precise definition of the noun category from the previous line ("jabłko, które…"). The image thus introduced of an apple stuck in the throat significantly complicates the semantics of duality presented at the beginning of the poem. The whole (language-apple) is harmonized in spite of the dissimilarity of parts, it becomes completed; but that completeness causes someone to stop being able to draw a voice out of themselves. This result is indicated by the hypotactic definition represented by the invocation of the phraseologism "*coś więźnie w gardle komuś*" (his or her voice is gone).[20] The duality in the next construction functions in a similar way – in the second part of the line we find the expression "dwa końce kija" (two ends of a stick), which also evokes a phraseologism, "*każdy kij ma dwa końce*" (meaning every coin has two sides, every situation has its good and bad side).[21] This is thus an extension of the decription of language's dual nature, whose peculiarity was presented by the speaking subject at the beginning of the poem. Here again, the subsequent line begins with a relative pronoun, which – again, after a line ending with a comma – allows the construction to be interpreted as a hypotactic definition of the noun category ("kij, który "). This second defining expression in particular should be examined, because it constitutes a reference to the image being built from the beginning of language's duality. This happens if for no other reason because of the invocation of the fairyland motif of the magic stick (or the stick in a sack)[22] which invariably reveals the difficult unity of the language of youth and the language of mature years. The consistently maintained duality – the ardor and naïveté of the first language and the scepticism and severity (but also detachment) of the second – suggests, in the text, a difficult indissolubility, which is not only shown at the level of simple referentiality of particular words, but also at the level of the construction of the text and the relations between its parts. Accommodation in both senses only intensifies the effect of doubling, creating simultaneously a complicated image of cohesiveness (of image and text). Regardless of whether the object is the object indicated in the text (the noun and its functions) or the line as a unit of meaning in the text, this richness of poetic syntax gives us solid foundations for further interpretative steps.

[20]See. http://www.wsjp.pl/index.php?id_hasla=37761 (accessed: 20.11.2016).

[21]http://wsjp.pl/index.php?id_hasla=4461&ind=0&w_szukaj=kij (accessed: 20.11.2016).

[22]See the Grimm brothers' "Table-Be-Set, Gold-Donkey, and Cudgel-out-of-the-Sack" or Ewa Szelburg-Zarembina's "Kije samobije" (The Magic Stick).

Syntactic relations in a poem are also clearly a problem of coordinate relations – both at the level of individual words and cohesiveness within lines, and also at the textual level. The text by Jacek Gutorow shown below can serve as a basic illustration of such phenomena; in it, parataxis becomes the constructive dominant of the perspective of the subject. The equivalence of categories or phenomena often produces an effect of simultaneity, causing the typical categories of description of reality to be recontextualized and create chains of objects whose intratextual relations imply a peculiar kind of image of the world:

Parataksa (*Inne tempo* [Another Tempo], Wrocław 2008, p. 28)

właśnie w tej chwili siedzę <u>przy biurku na placu teatralnym</u> i zapisuję
te słowa, które mają mnie uratować

właśnie w tej chwili zrobiłem kawę, a ty rozpuściłaś włosy takim gestem,
jakby miały opaść do samej ziemi

właśnie w tej chwili <u>miasta obwodnice jezdnie ciągi neonów zestrzelone
obłoki niosące resztki ech nad miastem piękne miasto</u>
[...]

właśnie w tej chwili kropla deszczu spływa po szybie i nie ma w tym
nic ale to nic poetyckiego
[...]

(**Parataxis.** at this exact moment i'm sitting by an office in the theatre square and writing down / these words that are supposed to save me // at this exact moment i made coffee, and you let your hair down with a gesture, / as if it was supposed to reach the ground // at this exact moment cities districts roadways rows of neon signs concentrated / clouds carrying remains of echoes over the city beautiful city / [...] // at this exact moment a drop of rain flows across the pane and in that there is / nothing but nothing poetic / [...])

The first line introduces the condensed image "przy biurku na placu," whose grammatical structure can constitute a kind of foreshadowing of later lines in the text. It is also, however, an example of the functioning of implications motivated by colloquial expressions. As a result, there arises a synthetic description of the place from two perspectives – internal and external – with a simultaneous display of the object as a point of reference. That nonetheless does not invalidate the image of a place – a possible thought abbreviation allows for such an implication. This results from the typical sequence of words used in the line (and thus not so much from the lexemes as in fact from their relations). "Przy biurku na placu" is also an effect of hierarchization motivated by the perspective of the subject; the sequence of definitions is typical for a participant in an activity who describes it, rather than for an observer of it. Prepositional expressions are here typical for a change of sequence ("na placu przy biurku") – the reader then would face the challenge in the form of the relayer of information about subject-object relations. The terms "przy" and "na" designate the basic parameters of the phenomenon being described. The innovative nature of this procedure boils down to the figure

of a chain of two equal expressions; it is possible, however, to imagine a much more difficult version, defying standard mechanisms of conceptualization.

The parallelism visible in the next two lines of Gutorow's work constitutes an example of yet another use of syntax to precisely define the object, and is simultaneously an illustration of a different semasiological mechanism. "Zrobiłem kawę, a ty rozpuściłaś włosy." The equivalence of these two activities in the line is the basis for an expansion of the semantics of the line syntagma. The parallel between the activities involving coffee and hair juxtaposes the two categories of objects and actions performed on them as singular in terms of the situation presented. One factor that justifies such an interpretation is the disruption of (or rather, innovative approach to) continuity in this text. It is not the logic of sequentiality, or chains of cause and effect or categoricality that determines the exposition of objects and phenomena but rather syntax, or, more precisely – syntagmatic relations between elements in a line. A clear example of this is another passage:

> właśnie w tej <u>chwili miasta obwodnice jezdnie ciągi neonów zestrzelone</u>
> obłoki niosące resztki ech nad miastem piękne miasto

"Zestrzelenie" of objects represents, on the one hand, their elimination or destruction by force of arms, while on the other (and this is what the peculiar chain of elements without punctuation suggests) it means their accumulation, convergence, sum or ratio, and thus the mutual interaction and recontextualization of combined categories. Clouds can also be concentrated – and this is a typical consequence of interlineal tension – as clouds can also carry the remains of echoes (remains after concentration) over the city, creating beauty. The movement of things (objects) is expressed both lexically and phraseologically ("at this moment" something is happening, simultaneously, suddenly, in a way that makes it impossible to count all of the elements involved), as well as by a syntactic chain combined with a slowing-down of sound through the tension of the interlineal.

It is worth our while, however, to return to accommodation. In the context of the problems discussed here, accommodation poses the following question: what do objects (as grammatical categories) demand, but also – what is demanded of them? These demands are syntactic in character, and therefore also semantic, referential, connotative, and so on. Precisely on that basis, we can describe a "pot with water," "water in a pot," or a "pot of water," and similarly – half a glass of water or a half-empty glass. To illuminate this circumstance, another example will help – this time from the poetry of Ewa Lipska.

> **Grudzień** (*Drzazga* [Splinter], Kraków 2006, p. 27)
>
> *Moja ty myszo optyczna* mówi do niej on.
> Na niebie ślizgawica. Coraz krótszy grudzień.
> Zamarza <u>gadatliwe miasto</u>.
>
> A w nich wrzątek miłości. <u>Tylko pocałunek</u>
> <u>nie odbiega od reszty</u>. W ustach szron.

Na łyżwach samogłoska.
Moja ty myszo optyczna mówi do niej on.

(**December.** *My optical mouse you*, he says to her. / Glazed frost in the sky. December shorter and shorter. / The garrulous city is freezing up. // While in them love is boiling hot. Only a kiss / does not stray from the rest. Hoar-frost in the mouth. / A vowel on skates. / *My optical mouse you*, he says to her.)

It should be underscored – a crucial fact in the context of Lipska's poem – that one manifestation of accommodation in poetic syntax is anthropomorphicization. It can be executed by means of incorporating objects and phenomena in syntactic relations – through their subordination to human action or to a condition, but also through the implication of human traits (for example, in terms of an attribute – here, skates). Anthropomorphicization here is an ideal example of the expansion of categoriality in description, albeit in close connection with the practice of colloquialism ("moja ty myszo optyczna"), and thus a non-specialized, basic description of the perceived world. It is thus a peculiar thing, in this context, that the daily practice of transferring the features and properties of objects to our own human perspective becomes the source of effective metaphorical constructions, astonishing innovations and (frequently) catachretic curiosities.

The repeated phrase "moja ty myszo optyczna," which in the text has the status of a quotation, represents an example of original, modern reification. The apparent tenderness generated by the comparison with a highly advanced manual accessory used to perform a great many tasks at the computer (an object that functions as a medium – mediating between human being and computer) finds its basic grammatical expression in the unconventional form of the vocative case. In this case, personification (because of the lack of expressions of corporeality) is completed through the exploitation of the paradigm's possibilities ("myszo"). The whole perspective of the subject in the poem, however, indicates full equivalence between the orders of objects and of human beings (in various metonymic arrangements).

The exhibition of the qualities of a kiss through the paradox that emerges in view of the peculiar lineal retardation ("tylko pocałunek / nie odbiega od reszty") represents yet another singular feature of the kind of poetic syntax being presented in this essay. "Tylko pocałunek," with the closing of the vowel (especially *o*, the most frequently repeated vowel in this bookend line) used to express unsatisfied need, a sign perversely testifying to the intensity of feeling, is another example of the dynamics of potential syntactic functions, the contingent interpretative possibilities of the poem form, but with a perception of the phraseological stabilization in the language of receivers ("nie odbiega od reszty"). As a result of relations between lines, an image thus takes shape which is much more complicated. The modulant "tylko" activates, in the lineal perspective, the meanings: "not much," "too little," "disproportionately" (to the boiling water of love), while in the interlineal perspective it also adds the meanings: "exclusively," "unlike everything else." Thus through syntactic condensation (multifunctionality of textual elements in the poem) a semantically complex process of accommodation takes place. The kiss therefore has its properties diffused in context, but is also exhibited via the only open line in the text. It is thus simultaneously warm and cold, open and closed, harmonized with

the rest though unique in its intimacy. Accommodation in its interlineal formulation here causes the precise defining at once of both the function of the noun (object) and the syntagmatic relation between relational lines.

The Ocean in a Glass of Water – Attempt at a Summing-up

The approximate and fragmentary interpretations presented here represent an illustration of some characteristic phenomena of poetic syntax. The artefacts presented in these illustrations become objects with multiple values, and are ultimately defined by the relations of elements in the text primarily in terms of the lines' semantic autonomy. Accommodation understood as adaptation to syntactic demands becomes a mechanism of metaphorization, definition and contextual revitalization of lexical elements. The artefacts that work to help create space in the text in this manner (by means of lexical references and typical semantic-syntactic roles) acquire features that dismantle conceptual categoriality and, by virtue of their multiplicity of functions, intensify the interpretative projects constructed by the reader. Syntactic relations, precisely, as rules of a particular text (but also rules of a poem) become the primary motivator of original meanings which nevertheless do not invalidate standard linguistic mechanisms such as repeatability, typicality and categoriality as the foundations of meaning in a text constructed by the reader. As in the passage from the poem by Różewicz, the object is set in motion by relations among words and relations among lines within a poem. Each construction reveals the objects described in a different perspective and with distinct contextual dependencies. Sometimes – as in the poems by Siwczyk and Karask – this point is reached by relations between the simple referentiality of individual lexemes or lexicalized words and the referentiality of actualized phraseological unions. At other times – as in the cases of Grzebalski and Lipska – the referentiality of lexemes is confronted with references that result from metaphorical combinations, and finally – as in the case of Gutorow – recontextualization is effected by means of a combination of nominal or paratactic chains. In all of these cases, it needs to be underscored that the phenomenon of accommodation in poetry does not mean simply the adaptation of elements of an utterance to the demands of actual syntagmatic functions. In the case of free verse it is also multifactorial adaptation – formulating relations in lines, between lines but also in the text as a whole. All of these levels of textual analysis contribute to the creation of an interpretative project; only in the light of aspects of such an interpretation, through the recognition of a peculiar simultaneity of multiple readings and the spatiality of the poem, does the richness of poetry make itself known.

KEYWORDS | ABSTRACT | NOTE ON THE AUTHOR ● ● ●

KEYWORDS

poetic syntax

RELATIONALITY

Abstract:

The article deals with the problem of poetic syntax in free verse, examined with reference to the phenomenon of accommodation. The cases analyzed here of the conceptualization of objects in poetic texts (and thus in categories of nouns) allow for a two-track discussion: at the level of elements creating the space of a poem, i.e., the textual accommodation of individual line syntagmas, and also at the level of objects with their lexical (nominal) manifestations in the text, i.e., syntactic accommodation. Accommodation understood as adaptation to syntactic demands becomes, in this formulation, a mechanism of metaphorization, specification and contextual reinvigoration of lexical elements. The objects that thus together create the space in a text (by means of lexical references and typical semantic-syntactic roles) acquire features that disrupt conceptual categorization and due to their multiple functions reinforce the interpretative projects constructed by the reader. Each individual phenomenon is illustrated with poems by renowned contemporary poets.

process of metaphorization

accommodation

F R E E   V E R S E

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Tracing (Traces of) Meaning. Text and Literature in Postmodern Hermeneutics

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> Understanding the text is never understanding what was *intended* to be understood – herein lies the fundamental *negativity of the hermeneutic experience*[1]

Postmodern hermeneutics, also called radical hermeneutics, have to a large extent grown out of postmodernist thought. It is as estimable an inheritance as it is a troublesome, for who has been accused more often than the postmodernists of propagating the interpretative frivolity expressed in the slogan "anything goes" (to which we only sometimes see appended the rigorous stipulation: *if it works*)? But the relation of radical hermeneutics to the text is by no means free, quite the contrary – to complete the hermeneutic task with full radicalism means precisely to keep "close to the text." The problem is that both "closeness" and "text" are here understood in rather specific ways.

"To Let Something Be Said to You" – The Text in Gadamerian Hermeneutics

The fact that the text is important in hermeneutics is apparent from the figure of the hermeneutic circle, which, in its most popular version, asserts that understanding always follows a trajectory from part to whole and from whole to part, thereby placing on the reader the

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[1] P. Kuligowski, *Humanistyka jako hermeneutyka*, Wrocław 2007, pp. 290-291 (quoted in: K. Szkaradnik, "Czy podejście hermeneutyczne jest interpretacyjnym wytrychem? Diagnoza i propozycja w kontekście współczesnej prozy" [Is the Hermeneutic Approach an Interpretative Skeleton-key? A Diagnosis and Proposal in the Context of Contemporary Prose], text awaiting publication by *Przestrzeń Teorii* [the Space of Theory], shown to me by the author in manuscript form).

requirement of carefully tracing the individual parts, fragments, layers, or levels of the text and verifying on that basis the image of the whole that is drawn in the course of a reading. But the hermeneutic circle also says that for hermeneutics the reader is equally important: as on ontological ground every understanding is always self-understanding,[2] so on interpretative ground – whose most important reading was provided by Hans-Georg Gadamer – I understand myself in the face of the understood text, in the course of reading a mutual exchange of questions and answers takes place between the text and me, a peculiar kind of "conversation,"[3] in which – to now cite Paul Ricoeur – "text and reader are in turn made familiar and unfamiliar."[4]

That happens because of the "nature" of the text, the hermeneutic understanding of which was presented by Gadamer in his essay "Text and Interpretation": "we find the hermeneutical relationship involved in our concept of text whenever we encounter resistance to our assumption of the primordial meaningfulness of the given. [...] [F]rom the hermeneutical standpoint – which is the standpoint of every reader – the text is a mere intermediate product [*Zwischenprodukt*], a phase in the event of understanding [...]."[5] There are at least three conclusions to draw from this: firstly, "meaning" is that, around which the hermeneutical reading of the text is focused; secondly, this "meaning" is something unclear at first, something that only needs to be *made present* in the process of understanding; thirdly and finally, the text appears only as an epiphenomenon, fulfilling a subordinate function in this process of presence.[6] But how does this process take place? That in fact is revealed to be an ambiguous question, based on Gadamerian hermeneutics itself.

On the one hand, despite the fact that Gadamer, as we see, perceives the problematic aspects of the assumption of "primordial meaningfulness of the given," he explicitly underscores the necessity (and possibility) of its full presence whenever he repeats that every form of hermeneutics is "a form of overcoming an awareness of suspicion,"[7] whenever he points to "reconstruction and integration as hermeneutic tasks";[8] indeed whenever he argues that at the end of the process of interpretation, the "interpreter gives his reasons, disappears, and the text speaks,"[9] as if in fact the result were expected to be a miraculous unification of the meanings conveyed by the work. In truth, Gadamer underscores with complete fixity of purpose that "only what really constitutes a unity of meaning is intelligible."[10]

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[2] See M. Heidegger, *Bycie i czas* (Being and Time), trans. B. Baran, Warszawa 2010, pp. 202-209.

[3] See H.-G. Gadamer, *Prawda i metoda. Zarys hermeneutyki filozoficznej* (Truth and Method. Outline of Philosophical Hermeneutics), trans. B. Baran, Warszawa 2016, pp. 493-517.

[4] P. Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, vol. 3, trans. Kathleen Blamey, Chicago 1988, pp. 321-322.

[5] H.-G. Gadamer, "Text and Interpretation," trans. Richard E Palmer, in *The Gadamer Reader: A Bouquet of the Later Writings*, ed. Richard E. Palmer, Evanston 2007, p. 169.

[6] I am indebted to Katarzyna Szkaradnik for this observation.

[7] H.-G. Gadamer, "The Hermeneutics of Suspicion," in Hermeneutics: Questions and Prospects, ed. Gary Shapiro and Alan Sica, Amherst 1984, p. 54.

[8] See H.-G. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. W. Glen-Doepel, revised by Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall, London 2013, p. 164.

[9] H.-G. Gadamer, "Text and Interpretation," p. 191.

[10] H.-G. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p. 305.

On the other hand, however, Gadamer himself "waters down" such finalizing claims in his book *The Relevance of the Beautiful*: "it does not mean that the indeterminate anticipation of sense that makes a work significant for us can ever be fulfilled so completely that we could appropriate it for knowledge and understanding in all its meaning. [...] To expect that we can recuperate within the concept the meaningful content that addresses us in art is already to have overtaken art in a very dangerous manner."[11] A similar ambiguity marks the ideal of the "fusion of horizons," which by no means constitutes some kind of *telos* of understanding, but is rather something processual, temporary, constantly being newly de- and reconstructed,[12] such that it can be formulated more as a regulative than as a constitutive idea, in fact underscoring the primacy of difference and misunderstanding over identity and understanding: "all efforts at trying to understand something begin when one comes up against something that is strange, challenging, disorienting."[13]

And thus on the one hand we see a concentration of meaning, while on the other, quite the contrary – its constant dispersal. It seems that the oscillation of Gadamerian hermeneutics around these two poles of understanding is a direct result of the position of the reader who *desires* to understand, but also wants to do justice to the text itself. Hence Gadamer's opposition to method – to want to understand the text is to perceive its individuality, its singularity, how it eludes methods, which can, to be sure, help in understanding by shedding light on it from one angle or another, but which should under no circumstances be blindly applied to it.[14] For what hermeneutic play with the text is about is its otherness, as a condition for the possibility of accomplishing a rearrangement of the reader's existence: "We cannot understand without wanting to understand, that is, without wanting to let something be said", "It is not only the impact of a 'This means you!' that is disclosed in a joyous and frightening shock; it also says to us: 'You must change your life!'".[15]

"Reassemblage of the Totality of a Text into the Truth of Its Meaning" – Derrida's Critique of Hermeneutics

The respect Gadamer declares for the text's otherness nonetheless did not protect hermeneutics from a critique by Jacques Derrida, who saw the whole hermeneutic enterprise as wrongheaded due to what Anna Burzyńska has termed its "silent supposition" that the text has meaning.[16] This charge – formulated in various ways, but boiling down to essentially the irrefutable axiom of the "task of making present" meaning – was articulated by Derrida both

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[11]H.-G. Gadamer, *The Relevance of the Beautiful and Other Essays*, trans. Nicholas Walker, Cambridge 1987, p. 33.

[12]See P. Dybel, *Oblicza hermeneutyki* (Faces of Hermeneutics), Kraków 2012, p. 340.

[13]H.-G. Gadamer, "Language and Understanding," in Theory, Culture & Society 23(1), 1970, p. 14.

[14]See H.-G. Gadamer, Ästhetik *und Poetik,* Volume 2, Tűbingen 1993. A similar aspect can be seen in Ricoeur's conviction that hermeneutics changes into a method only when it is sanctioned as such by the text itself or (the existence understood through the text): "in every instance, each hermeneutics discovers the aspect of existence which founds it as method." (P. Ricoeur, *The Conflict of Interpretations*, trans. Kathleen McLaughlin, Evanston 1974, p. 19.)

[15]H.-G. Gadamer, "Aesthetics and Hermeneutics," trans. David E. Linge, in *The Gadamer Reader*, pp. 129, 131.

[16]See A. Burzyńska, "Jak czytali dekonstrukcjoniści" (How the Deconstructionists Read), in *Anty-teoria literatury* (Anti-theory of Literature), Kraków 2006, p. 275.

during a public discussion with Gadamer in 1981,[17] and in many of his essays. In his view, hermeneutic reading takes the form of a "transcendent" reading, one that always refers to something outside the text, toward meaning (one that founds or precedes the text). The hermeneutic practice of "staying close to the text" is thus revealed to be illusory, since it fact it revolves around what is *outside* the text itself. The principle of Protestant hermeneutics known as *sola Scriptura* would then present a similar surface illusion; according to Paweł Dybel, it implies a "rigorous approach to the letter of the text,"[18] but in fact establishes a "literal" interpretation based on the external authority of divine inspiration. As Derrida says, in such an understanding, "reading and writing, the production or interpretation of signs, the text in general as a fabric of signs, allow themselves to be confined within secondariness. They are preceded by a truth, or a meaning already constituted by and within the element of the logos."[19] "Understanding" is thus a "reassemblage of the totality of a text into the truth of its meaning[.]"[20]

It should, however, be remembered that the practice of hermeneutics does not represent the main culprit here, but rather constitutes an heir to the logocentric tradition of metaphysical philosophy, which it – in its own reckoning – attempts to transcend (respect for the text's otherness), but in which it still keeps one leg (the text conveys a meaning to me). When Derrida talked of "hermeneutics," without using that word to refer to a particular representative of hermeneutic reflection, he generally had in mind the tradition of Western philosophy that Heidegger called "onto-hermeneutic," in which Structuralism or Ferdinand de Saussure's semiotics were much more deeply entrenched than the Gadamerian or Ricoeurian versions of hermeneutics. That tradition, as described in Derrida's now-classic article "Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences," protects the free play of a structure by inscribing it in some central, or logocentric, stabilizing idea that simultaneously situates it outside the structure itself.[21] One example would be hermeneutic "meaning," another, the semiotic "referent" or – simply put – the "transcendent *signifié*."

Derrida's response to that "reassemblage of the totality of a text into the truth of its meaning" was not – as is still commonly imputed to him – to promise total interpretative freedom. On the contrary, deconstructive reading stays very close to the text; one might even

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[17]On the subject of Derrida and Gadamer's meeting in Paris, see e.g. K. Bartoszyński, "Hermeneutyka a dekonstrukcja. Hans-Georg Gadamer i Jacques Derrida wobec poezji" (Hermeneutics and Deconstructon. Hans-Georg Gadamer and Jacques Derrida on Poetry), in *Kryzys czy trwanie powieści. Studia literaturoznawcze* (Crisis or Continuation of the Narrative. Literary Studies), Kraków 2004; P. Dybel, "Poza dialektyką? Spór Gadamera z Derridą" (Beyond Dialectics? Gadamer's Dispute with Derrida), in *Granice rozumienia i interpretacji. O hermeneutyce Hansa-Georga Gadamera* (Boundaries of Understanding and Interpretation. On the Hermeneutics of Hans-Georg Gadamer), Kraków 2004; P. Dehnel, "Dekonstrukcja a hermeneutyka" (Deconstruction and Hermeneutics), in *Dekonstrukcja – rozumienie – interpretacja. Studia z filozofii współczesnej i nie tylko* (Deconstruction, Understanding, Interpretation. Studies in Contemporary Philosophy and Much More), Kraków 2006.

[18]See P. Dybel, *Oblicza hermeneutyki…*, pp. 120-127.

[19]J. Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Baltimore 1997, p. 14.

[20]J. Derrida, *Positions*, trans. Alan Bass, Chicago 1982, p. 45.

[21]See J. Derrida, "Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences," in *The Languages of Criticism and the Sciences of Man: The Structuralist Controversy*, eds. Richard Macksey and Eugenio Donato, Baltimore 1970, pp. 247-265.

call it the art of microreading *par excellence*[22]: "With Joyce, I was able to pretend to isolate two words (*He war* or *yes, yes*); with Celan, one foreign word (*Shibboleth*); with Blanchot, one word and two homonyms (*pas*). But I will never claim to have 'read' or proposed a general reading of these works."[23] That list, as we know, could be supplemented with many other examples: Mallarmé's "hymen," Rousseau's "supplement," Plato's "farmakon," Kant's "parergon," and the "scandal" of the prohibition on incest in Lévi-Strauss… This focus of Derrida's on individual fragments in the texts he has read (but not definitively "read") obviously constitutes an important element in his strategy, which is based on underscoring the role of writing and its meaning-generating force, which plays out not outside the text, at the level of the signified (e.g. signified meaning), but inside it, at the level of signifiers. Remaining faithful to this play of signifiers involves a reading which the author of *Of Grammatology* called "non-transcendent," not abandoning its interest in the signifier, form, language, the material from which the text's structure is created. In contrast, however, to the theoreticians known as the American deconstructionists (the Yale critics), for whom a "permanent parabasis of allegory" would mean a total suspension of logic and the opening of a space for the "aberration"[24] of referentiality, Derrida highlighted the simultaneous impossibility of not undertaking a transcendent reading: "a text cannot by itself avoid lending itself to a 'transcendent' reading. [...] The moment of 'transcendence' is irrepressible, but it can be complicated or folded [...]."[25]

A transcendent reading is impossible, since there is no exit from the textual web in which our interpretations are entangled. But a transcendent reading is also necessary, since we all read with a desire to *extract* from the text some kind of meaning for ourselves. Postmodern hermeneutics tries to follow after this double bind; it desires to take Derrida's lesson seriously, realizing that such "meaning" is an effect of the text itself, that in fact it is impossible to *extract* (in the sense of removing) the meaning from the text, since it is always located *in* the text, in the archi-texture: "What I call 'text' implies all the structures called 'real,' 'economic,' 'historical,' socio-institutional, in short: all possible referents. [...] That does not mean that all referents are suspended, denied, or enclosed in a book [...]. But it does mean that every referent, all reality has the structure of a differential trace, and that one cannot refer to this 'real' except in an interpretative experience."[26] And thus, not the discontinuance of any kind of understanding reading, but, as Derrida says, "the process of decoding [...] must be carried to the furthest lengths possible."[27]

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[22]This has been very strongly underscored by such interpreters of Derrida as Christopher Norris ("Deconstruction is therefore an activity of reading which remains closely tied to the texts it interrogates" – *Deconstruction and Practice*, London and New York 1993, p. 31) or John D. Caputo (see *Deconstruction in a Nutshell. A Conversation with Jacques Derrida*, New York 1997, pp. 74-81). Aleksander Nawarecki also treated Derrida as one of the "patrons" of his project of micrology (see *Miniatura i mikrologia literacka* [Literary Miniature and Micrology], vols. 1-2, ed. A. Nawarecki, Katowice 2000-2001).

[23]"'This Strange Institution Called Literature': An Interview with Jacques Derrida," in *Acts of Literature*, ed. Derek Attridge, New York 1992, pp. 61-62.

[24]See P. de Man, *Allegories of Reading: Figural Language in Rousseau, Nietzsche, Rilke, and Proust*, New Haven 1979, pp. 300-301.

[25]"'This Strange Institution,'" p. 45.

[26]J. Derrida, *Limited Inc.*, trans. S. Weber, J. Mehlman, Evanston 1988, p. 148.

[27]See J. Derrida, *Spurs*, p. 133.

The Derrida-Gadamer Controversy: A Repetition (with a Displacement)

Can we not, however, after tracing this collision course between the thought of Derrida and that of Gadamer, look at the whole problem again from a somewhat different angle? Is it not possible to say that some deconstructive "element" fits into the very centre of the hermeneutic experience? Is that not what Richard E. Palmer, member of the group known as Spanos devoted to developing a postmodernist literary hermeneutics based on Heideggerian thought,[28] has in mind when he states that "[t]o focus purely on the positivity of what a text explicitly says is to do an injustice to the hermeneutical task," while "[q]ueasiness about 'doing violence to the text' must not become an excuse for turning away from the hermeneutical task of hearing deeply into the 'what' behind the explicitness of the text"[29]? Does not Ricoeur lean toward the deconstructive pole when he directly says that "writing, and above all the structure of the work, modify reference to the point of rendering it entirely problematic," that with respect to understanding, "appropriation is the dialectical counterpart of distanciation," and that "everything gained from the critique of the illusions of the subject must be integrated into hermeneutics"?[30] Is it, finally, possible, outside the explicitness of the text, to show several fundamental affinities of Derridean and Gadamerian thought[31]? Let us try to define them.

It appears possible to discover in Derrida a peculiar repetition (which would at the same time be a repetition with a displacement, an iteration) of the schema of dialogue between text and reader as a constant exchange of questions and answers. Derrida of course rewrites it in his own language, speaking of the "signature" of author and text and the reader's "countersignature", which amends it. In both cases, however, we are dealing with a similar ontology of the literary work, which only exists (i.e., becomes actualized) in the process of interpretation. And though this actualization takes place in various ways (more as an "ecumenical" dialogue for Gadamer, more as an "agonistic" exchange for Derrida), we might risk cautiously positing the thesis that next to the hermeneutic circle it would be possible to speak of a specific ("dislocated," because deprived of its overall dimension) deconstructive circle, where the point is likewise a kind of answer to the challenge of the text: "I almost always write in response to solicitations or provocations," but "my response to such expectations is not always docile."[32] In this "provocation" we must hear a *pro-vocatio*, a challenge directed to none other than ourselves, calling to impart a creative answer, to amend the idiom of the text with our own idiomatic signature. As is known, Derrida speaks in such cases of invention,[33] but do we not find him here – still – very close to Gadamer, for whom "all efforts at trying to understand something begin" with what "is strange, challenging, disorienting"?

[28]On this topic, see e.g.. N. Leśniewski, *O hermeneutyce radykalnej* (On Radical Hermeneutics), Poznań 1998, pp. 35-40.

[29]R.E. Palmer, "A Hermeneutical Manifesto," in *Hermeneutics*, Evanston 1969, pp. 234-235

[30]P. Ricoeur, "The Hermeneutic Function of Distanciation," trans. John E. Thompson, in *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences: Essays on Language, Action and Interpretation*, Cambridge 1981, pp. 141, 94, 191.

[31]See also my article: "Czy można pogodzić dekonstrukcję z hermeneutyką? Dialog Derridy z Gadamerem" (Can Deconstruction be Reconciled with Hermeneutics? Derrida's Dialogue with Gadamer), *Czas Kultury* 2014, no. 5.

[32]"This Strange Institution," p. 41.

[33]See e.g. J. Derrida, *Psyche. Inventions of the Other*, trans. Peggy Kamuf and Elizabeth Rottenberg, Stanford 2007.

We should also stress once again the ambivalence of the Gadamerian text, which, though it sets before the interpreter the task of reconstructing and integrating the meaning of the literary work, simultaneously never asserts that such unification is unproblematic. On the contrary, it is incumbent upon us to ponder whether, in the context of Gadamer's hermeneutics, such unification can ever in fact take place. Gadamer himself speaks just as often instead about the "surplus" of meaning, of "being struck by the meaning of what is said,"[34] which destroys any "anticipation of meaning." And once again: is it not possible to hear in this a kind of equivalent to Derridean "excess of *signifiants*" that undermines any kind of procedures whose goal is to protect the play of meanings? If we answer that question affirmatively, then in Derrida's concept of the "trace" we would have to also see a radicalization of modern hermeneutics' theses (Gadamer's, but also Mikhail Bakhtin's) of the dialogical understanding. In both places, we are told that any kind of understanding takes place in a community – in a community of people and signs whose mutual exchange has no end.

At this point, however, comes a rupture. Because although a "trace" can be grasped as a radicalization of the "dialogical," that "right," as John D. Caputo has observed, does not apply in the opposite case: the "dialogical" itself, at least as conceived in Gadamerian terms, does not allow the logic of the "trace."[35] That is why the author of *Radical Hermeneutics* asserts that Derrida's and Gadamer's ontologies of the work of art are, in spite of everything, significantly dissimilar from each other – whereas Derrida's "trace" refers only to other "traces" (a dislocated deconstructive circle), Gadamer's "fragment" connotes the existence of a whole (the hermeneutic circle): "The Gadamerian fragment is a symbolon which is to be fitted together with its missing half, which is a perfect match for it, a token by which we can recognize infinity, the whole, the holy. The remain(s) in deconstruction are the […] *symbolon* which was shattered too badly ever to be fitted together, indeed which never was a whole."[36]

"To the Furthest Lengths Possible" – Hermeneutics After Deconstruction

As noted earlier, postmodern hermeneutics tries to take Derrida's lesson seriously, and even grows directly of from it. In this context, Caputo writes that deconstruction is a "gateway" through which hermeneutics must pass in order to return less innocent and naïve than before.[37] But the necessity of passing through that gate results not only from the desire to continue practicing hermeneutics after deconstruction, but also from observation of the fundamental *hermeneutic* aspect of deconstruction itself: "There is no hermeneutic recovery without deconstruction and no deconstruction not aimed at recovery."[38] The hermeneutic experience understood as the "primordial" situation of being thrown into the world (even if the world of the text) and desiring to find (recover) oneself in that world inheres *at the center* of the decon-

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[34]See H.-G. Gadamer, "Language and Understanding," in *The Gadamer Reader*, p. 129.

[35]See J.D. Caputo, *More Radical Hermeneutics: On Not Knowing Who We Are*, Bloomington and Indianapolis 2000, p. 53.

[36]Ibid., p. 50. Dybel also writes about the dissimilarity between Derrida and Gadamer's ontologies of the workof art, noting that it results from their operating in different orders: that of the signifier (the "trace" of which Derrida writes) and the signified (the "Thing" that Gadamer talks about) (see P. Dybel, *Granice rozumienia…*, pp. 457-463).

[37]See J.D. Caputo, *Radical Hermeneutics. Repetition, Deconstruction, and the Hermeneutic Project*, Bloomington and Indianapolis 1987, p. 97.

[38]Ibid., p. 65.

structive experience, such that deconstruction itself can be grasped *as a form of* hermeneutics – radical hermeneutics,[39] i.e. preserving its integrity in the face of the meaning-generating structure of every kind of sign, setting before itself the imperative of not misrepresenting its "real," random, unsteady condition, not grounded in any "transcendent *signifié*," aware of the fact that – as Michał Paweł Markowski says – all understanding is "contaminated with non-understanding."[40]

The lesson that postmodern hermeneutics draws from deconstruction thus involves, above all, paying closer attention to the textuality (the sign-ness) of the text. Though that aspect was perceived by certain currents in modern hermeneutics (particularly by Ricoeur), it is simply absent, as Wojciech Kalaga, among others, observes, from Heidgger's and Gadamer's conceptions.[41] Postmodern hermeneutics attempts to compensate for that semiotic deficit; one of its representative projects is Hugh J. Silverman's hermeneutic semiology, issuing from his belief that the text constitutes a phenomenon operating at the intersection of semiotics and hermeneutics, in connection with which "[a]s the reading identifies the textuality of the literary work, the reading deconstructs the text such that, on the one hand, the signs actualize the signification, and, on the other hand, the signification actualizes a meaning through interpretation."[42] This process of actualization turns out, however, to be unfinished, since textuality is not only a kind of "practice of the text" but also a "condition of the text" that determines its "trace" quality, resulting from connections with other texts and other signs. Caputo also draws attention to a similar aspect of textuality; his hermeneutics also "opens up" to the logic of *différance*[43] – it is that logic that determines the "trace" quality of the text and its "impure" nature. Because if every sign carries in itself a kind of "reminiscence" of preceding signs, and simultaneously somehow "anticipates" the signs that will succeed it, then to its stable identity breaks down. That is why Dybel is right in asserting that "every signifier is only itself to the extent that it is outside itself."[44] Literature, according to Caputo, represents the "exemplar" of such contamination.[45]

[39]See D. Hoy, "Jacques Derrida," in *The Return of Grand Theory in the Human Sciences.*, ed. Q. Skinner, Cambridge 1985, pp. 41-64.

[40]See M.P. Markowski, "Od rozumienia do nierozumienia" (From Understanding to Misunderstanding), in *Polityka wrażliwości. Wprowadzenie do humanistyki* (Politics of Sensitivity. Introduction to the Humanities), Kraków 2013, p. 233.

[41]W. Kalaga, *Mgławice dyskursu. Podmiot, tekst, interpretacja* (Nebulae of Discourse. Subject, Text, Interpretation), Kraków 2001, p. 49: " […] *the absence in the conceptual apparatus of hermeneutics of a coherent and methodologically active category of the sign.* Hermeneutics concentrates on problems of interpretation, at the same time not devoting much attention to the most important constitutive factor and medium of interpretative processes; it studies mechanisms of interpretation, overlooking the machinery that lies at its foundations"(see also the entire chapter on interpretation and ontology, in which the author conducts a curious postmodern attempt, complementing hermeneutics, at joining the positions of hermeneutics and semiotics toward the problem of interpretation).

[42]H.J. Silverman, *Textualities. Between Hermeneutics and Deconstruction*, New York and London 1994, p. 73. See also N. Leśniewski (translator of Silverman into Polish)'s discussion of Silverman's concept in "O tekstualności. Hermeneutyka semiologiczna Hugh J. Silvermana" (On Textuality. Hugh J. Silverman's Semiological Hermeneutics), in *O hermeneutyce radykalnej…*).

[43]See J.D. Caputo, *Radical Hermeneutics…*, p. 6.

[44]P. Dybel, *Oblicza hermeneutyki…*, p. 42.

[45]See J.D. Caputo, *Prayers and Tears of Jacques Derrida. Religion without Religion*, Bloomington and Indianapolis 1997, p. 52.

All of this does not signify, however, whether for Caputo, or for Silverman, or for Derrida himself, a cessation of any kind of hermeneutic efforts whatsoever. On the contrary, it could be said that such efforts must be additionally reinforced, precisely in order to carry the process of decoding to the furthest lengths possible. Those "furthest lengths possible" indicate that in the text itself are located elements which in a certain sense protect it "from any assured horizon of a hermeneutic question," and even cause the hermeneut to be "provoked and disconcerted,"[46] so that interpretation takes place in a "radical field of possible understanding,"[47] beyond which there is no way of going, if faithfulness to the text is to be preserved. "To carry the process of decoding... to the furthest lengths possible" thus means to have an awareness that the logic of *différance* is by no means the culmination of hermeneutic procedures, but on the contrary, is what forces them to proceed while simultaneously rendering impossible their *completion*: understanding is revealed to be an infinite process, if only it takes into consideration the "coefficient of indefinition"[48] that accompanies *différance*.

Is Michał Januszkiewicz then in the right when he asserts that the postmodern radicalization of hermeneutics takes place under the banner of the reader's intention?[49] It seems that the matter is not that simple, or even that it is marked by a fundamental *undecidability*. On the one hand, the radical-hermeneutic reader must be characterized by inventiveness, must respond to the text creatively, and that means essentially bringing his or her own perspective into the text. On the other hand, though, as we have seen above, that text says "something" to the reader, and in some sense "imposes" respect for its complicated textual games, not allowing total interpretative freedom, but also "blocking" interpretations that oversimplify its meaning, and seeking to pass for coherent, unifying and adequate. A radical hermeneutic interpretation thus does not present itself as either *legitimate* or *constructivist* – as Norbert Leśniewski has observed, its place is somewhere in between these two poles, in fact transcending both of them.[50] Why is this so? Let us see what a closer examination of the matter has to tell us.

Tracing the Trace – Ontology of the Text, Ontology of Reading

The radical hermeneutic ontology of the text is of course a "weak" ontology (in Vattimo's sense of the term): it does not ask what the text-in-itself is, but rather what happens in the text, what the text is as an event, as a specific phenomenon given only in the experience of reading. It thus treats it as something endless, i.e., semantically and structurally open, susceptible to recontextualization. Any literary work can, from the radical hermeneutic perspective, be identified with a "silva rerum" – a text exposed to the possibility of further development and structuring by the reader, a peculiar kind, as Ryszard Nycz says, of "musical score waiting for a readerly 'performance.'" To the extent, however, that the silva rerum constitutes

[46]See J. Derrida, *Spurs*, pp. 127, 133.

[47]N. Leśniewski's term, *O hermeneutyce radykalnej...*, p. 225.

[48]Ibid., p. 224.

[49]See M. Januszkiewicz, *W-koło hermeneutyki literackiej* (In the Literary Hermeneutic Circle), Warszawa 2007, pp. 19-21.

[50]See N. Leśniewski, *O hermeneutyce radykalnej...*, pp. 48-57 (though it is possible to observe that this Poznań scholar perpetuates the error of many interpreters who accuse Derrida of interpretative indulgence).

a certain "exemplary" model of a radical hermeneutical text, a manifestation of contemporary literature's "higher hermeneutic consciousness" (particularly since Nycz himself notes that the subject of silvas in a sense moves about in a "hermeneutic ring"[51]), it only brings into high relief qualities that are immanently proper to *all* texts.

That is because the text is grasped in postmodern hermeneutics not so much as an *ergon* (a work in the classical sense) but rather as an *energeia* – an operation with a distinct performative aspect. Such an approach is also in fact present in modern hermeneutics, as mentioned by Januszkiewicz[52] or – implicitly – by Katarzyna Rosner, who claims that "the text's meaning is not something already prepared, sealed in the text and requiring recognition. The text's meaning arises in the course of interpretation, through its assimilation, i.e. the relation of the communication contained within it to our existential situation, endowing it with referentiality to our world. Only through assimilation […] does the text speak to us, conveying its truth to us."[53] Postmodern hermeneutics maintains this view, but simultaneously weakens its "truth" claims, treating such questions as "assimilation," "communication contained within it," and "referentiality" with scepticism. It responds to Gadamerian performativity (the literary work says: this means you, you must change your life) with a purely Derridean performativity (the literary work sometimes says: there is no you – this means you![54]) – there is no "you," since "you" is only constituted as an effect of reading, it is, to speak in paradox, somehow *performatively stated*, called into existence by the text. In short: the reader's identity is a relational identity. The text itself, however, is revealed to be "the point of encounter of potentiality and actuality"[55] – a mutual exchange of traces, which can lead in the most varied directions (constructivist pole), and readerly concretizations, which always somehow tailor, restrain, stabilize this meaning-generating play, giving priority to certain traces over others (legitimatizing pole).[56]

If, however, the text is grasped as a trace, or rather a concentration of traces, it should be remembered that the trace signifies, as it were, beyond any significative intention. That means – as I have indicated above – that postmodern hermeneutics truly says goodbye to the concept of the work's intention (and, even more so, of authorial intention), but not to the concept itself of the text, though it does not treat it as substantial, but as an (*energeia*) *effect* of the play of traces that each time renews itself. So how should we understand the phrase "staying close to the text" in postmodern hermeneutics? It would be a kind of "tracing of traces," or also – as

[51]See R. Nycz, "Współczesne sylwy wobec literackości" (Contemporary Silvas and Literariness), in *Problemy teorii literatury. Seria 3* (Problems of Literary Theory. Series 3), ed. H. Markiewicz, Wrocław 1988, pp. 292, 283.

[52]See M. Januszkiewicz, *W-koło hermeneutyki literackiej…*, p. 60.

[53]K. Rosner, "Hermeneutyczny model obcowania z tekstem literackim" (The Hermeneutic Model of Contact with the Literary Text), in *Problemy teorii literatury. Seria 4* (Problems of Literary Theory. Series 4) ed. H. Markiewicz, Wrocław 1998, p. 300. We could also here again cite Richard E. Palmer, whose above-quoted "Hermeneutical Manifesto to American Literary Interpretation" argues that meaning is not an objective, eternal idea, but something that appears in a mutual relation (R. Palmer, *Hermeneutics…*, pp. 223-254).

[54]See J.D. Caputo, *More Radical Hermeneutics…*, p. 55.

[55]W. Kalaga, *Mgławice dyskursu…*, p. 227.

[56]The phenomenological language is not irrelevant here: Derrida's thought grows out of the phenomenological tradition, which perhaps revals itself most clearly in his convictions concerning the process of interpretation of the literary text. In his conversation with Derek Attridge, he said: "I believe this phenomenological-type language to be necessary, even if at a certain point it must yield to what, in the situation of writing or reading […] puts phenomenology in crisis" ("This Strange Institution," pp. 44-45).

Andrzej Zawadzki writes – "imitation [*naśladowanie*], walking in the trail of traces, tracking them and interpreting, them, answering them with one's own trace."[57] In a word: pursuing the traces of the text and following in the traces of their meaning-generating play, while simultaneously being aware that each re-presentation is a de-presentation, that each time we can neutralize the indefinition of meaning only *in a way*.[58] Because the text, as a tangle (from the Latin *texere*) of textual folds, layers, and tucks, conditions reading as their deconstruction, that is, unwrapping (or, as we often now hear in English, unpacking).[59] In Derrida's view, however, this work must remain endless, since a fold or wrinkle – *le pli*[60] – is that "elementary" element in the text that makes impossible its semantic closure. A full ex-li-cation of the text's meanings, in the sense of smoothing out all of their folds, therefore turns out to be impossible. For hermeneutics, this is naturally a source of drama. But it is also quite simply a condition for the possibility of practicing any kind of hermeneutics: if it were possible to unproblematically "unfold" all textual folds, there would be no need for hermeneutics. That is why the law of textuality should be properly kept in force.

Cracks in the text therefore not only do not permit "freewheeling" interpretation, but in fact, force the reader to perform a *faithful* microreading: "There exists a 'system' and there exists the text, but in the text there are cracks and resources that cannot be controlled by the systematic discourse [...]. Hence the necessity of constant, active interpretation, engaged like a scalpel in microbiology, strenuous and at the same time faithful."[61] One would even like to say that Derrida, in his postmodern hermeneutics, propose a particular close reading strategy, which is attentive (close) but differs from the method developed by the New Critics in not being *closed* but rather open to all of the contexts that those American formalists sought to eliminate. Because the text does not constitute a finite whole, but is, as Kalaga says, "'profligate.'"[62] In activating its energies, I must take into consideration all the analytical tools available to me, but I always perform that analytical work with consideration to *myself*, accenting what binds *me* to the text, what touches or moves me, and naturally *allowing* the loss of other meanings. In this sense understanding is never complete, and this results both from the finitude of the interpreter and from the "trace" structure of the sign.

This radical hermeneutic faithfulness to the text would thus be a faithfulness that is... unfaithful. If for Derrida, each signifier is itself to the extent that it is beyond itself, then at the level of interpretation there is a kind of "betrayal" of the text that corresponds to that paradox: the identity of the sign as something denotative is betrayed, but is betrayed in order to be able to continue signifying, to keep from solidifying its play, and to keep from identifying with it in some kind of tautological interpretation, but rather render respect to

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[57] A. Zawadzki, *Literatura a myśl słaba* (Literature and Weak Thought), Kraków 2009, p. 157.

[58] See N. Leśniewski, *O hermeneutyce radykalnej...*, p. 201, 203.

[59] See J.D. Caputo, *Deconstruction in a Nutshell...*, p. 88.

[60] See M.P. Markowski's reaosning on the topic of the fold/wrinkle/crease (*le pli*) in his *Efekt inskrypcji. Jacques Derrida i literatura* (The Inscription Effect. Jacques Derrida and Literature), Bydgoszcz 1997, pp. 261-267.

[61] Interview of Christian Descamps with Derrida in *Le Monde*, reprinted in *Entretiens avec* Le Monde: *Philosophies*, Paris 1984, pp. 78-90. For discussion of this topic, see A. Burzyńską, "Lekturografia. Derridowska filozofia czytania" (Lecturography. Derrida's Philosophy of Reading), in *Anty-teoria literatury...*.

[62] W. Kalaga, *Mgławice dyskursu...*, p. 222.

its otherness. For that reason, Januszkiewicz can say that "creative unfaithfulness" towards the text "is in fact faithfulness *par excellence*,"[63] and it results – on the one hand – from a kind of double bind (the text wants to communicate some meaning, and simultaneously can say nothing unequivocal), and, on the other – from a model of reading as a "duel of singularities," in which the countersignature confirms and repeats the signature of the other to the same extent as it "*lead*[s] *it off* elsewhere," iterating the "primary" text, extracting from it some kind of "truth" for itself.[64] If, then, there is supposed to be talk here of a correspondence between text and interpretation, it is only in the sense of "a responsible response," a corespondence, a mutual answering of each other, shared responsibility for meaning.

Painfulness

It seems that we could go so far as to describe the relationship of radical hermeneutics with the text using the metaphor of painfulness or arduousness.[65] That word would indicate, on the one hand, a lack of indifference in interpretation, a kind of being affected by the read text, a living relationship with the text, and on the other, the individuality of the experience of the text, the event (in the sense of unrepeatable, unique) nature of interpretation, in which the reader is existentially engaged. At the same time, it would also indicate the painful impossibility of unifying the results of an interpretation, and the painful multiplicity of the text's meanings, which do not surrender to hermeneutic operations.

This understanding of painfulness can also be found, I believe, in the work of both Gadamer and Derrida. As we remember, Gadamer described the experience of the literary text as "being struck by the meaning of what is said," which does not lead to a harmonious concentration of meaning, but surpasses any possible horizon of expectations. In the German original, "being struck" was expressed by the word *Betroffenheit*, in which word we can also hear the verb *treffen*, meaning (among other things) to physically hit, and the passive form *betroffen werden* means to be hit, struck, possibly hurt. The sense of touch and the problem of the painfulness of the work of art are also evoked by the concept, drawn from Heidegger, of the "push" (*Stoß*) that, according to Gadamer, the reader was supposed to experience from a work that had a particularly powerful effect on him. The "push" also does not respond harmoniously to the anticipation of meaning but rather leads to a painful "rupture."[66] We find analogous terms in Derrida's work, when he speaks of the experience of reading as an "ordeal"[67] (but also, importantly, "body," "desire"). The ordeal is painful because, as we read elsewhere, there is "no poem

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[63]See M. Januszkiewicz, "Hermeneutyka jako miejsce spotkania filozofii i literatury" (Hermeneutics as a Point of Encounter of Literature and Philosophy), in *Kim jestem ja, kim jesteś ty? Etyka, tożsamość, rozumienie* (Who Am I, Who Are You? Ethics, Identity, Understanding), Poznań 2012, p. 83.

[64]"This Strange Institution," p. 69. See also D. Attridge, "Reading and Responding," in *The Singularity of Literature*, New York 2017.

[65]See my article "Dotkliwe wiersze Aleksandra Wata" (Aleksander Wat's Painful Poems), which constitutes an attempt to use the category of "painfulness" in interpretative practice (the article is being prepared for publication in Pamiętnik Literacki, and will be published in a forthcoming issue of the magazine.

[66]The term comes from Gadamer's text *Und dennoch: Macht des guten Willens* (quoted in: P. Dehnel, *Dekonstrukcja a hermeneutyka…*, p. 88).

[67]"This Strange Institution," p. 50.

that does not open itself like a wound, but no poem that is not also just as wounding,"[68] which thus would not, on the one hand, expose itself to interference by the reader, and on the other, would not interfere painfully with the reader's world.

The category of painfulness seems to have several important assets. First of all, it indicates that the hermeneutic "understanding" is not – regardless of appearances to the contrary – a purely intellectual activity, but also has a bodily dimension, and involves the participation of affects, mood, a certain "orientation" on the reader's part. In this sense, Susan Sontag, for example, was wrong when she postulated the replacement of hermeneutics with an "erotics of art,"[69] since understanding is very much capable of being (though not required to be) erotically oriented. The reader is a reader of flesh and blood, and his body, for good or ill, takes part in the process of interpretation, even if a particular hermeneut may not underscore the fact.

Secondly, in such a perspective "staying close to the text" would mean in fact being sensitive to its painful sensations, i.e., as Andrzej Sosnowski says – allowing the text to "get into it with us," and simultaneously allowing it to "hit where it hurts," so that it could then mark me, leave some trace of itself in me, and so that that trace would leave a real impression, not leaving me to my own devices, making it impossible for me to neutralize it.[70] Painfulness, understood in this way, would also operate in the other direction: if the text gets into it with me or hits me where it hurts, then – as Markowski remarks on Sosnowski's concept – I too "in some way […] impose myself on what I am reading," such that we can speak here of a certain "*painful complicity*,"[71] of a mutual exchange between the "open… like a wound," "wounding" text and reader who "reads and enters into the spirit" of a work and also reads *himself* into it.[72]

Thirdly and finally, painfulness appears to present itself as an "undecidable" category: on the one hand, it underscores the painful aspect of being struck by the text, while on the other it also points toward a certain intimacy, or even eroticism, a tenderness (in both senses of that adjective) in the relationship with the text. On the one hand, it says that the text painfully marks me, on the other, that I intervene in the text, adding to it my countersignature. Because everything happens at this intersection, at this point of encounter, in this *inter-esse*,

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[68] J. Derrida, "Che cos'è la poesia?", trans. Peggy Kamuf, in *A Derrida Reader: Between the Blinds*, New York 1991, p. 233.

[69] S. Sontag, *Against Interpretation and Other Essays*, New York 1967, p. 14. For similar reasons, I find Izabella Bukraba-Rylska's diagnosis that in contemporary humanities a shift has been made from "hermeneutic 'understanding' to somatic 'experience'" to be inapt, since understanding itself is already a "somatic experience" (see I. Bukraba-Rylska, "Humanistyka współczesna. Od hermeneutycznego 'rozumienia' do somatycznego 'doświadczenia'" (Contemporary Humanities. From Hermeneutic "Understanding" to Somatic "Experience"), *Kultura Współczesna* 2015, no. 2).

[70] See A. Sosnowski, *Ostatnia miłość literatury* (Literature's Last Love), *Literatura na Świecie* 1998, pp. 11-12.

[71] M.P. Markowski, *Od rozumienia do nierozumienia…*, pp. 260-261.

[72] I refer here to M. Januszkiewicz's proposal ("Wczytywanie (się) w tekst. O interpretacji transakcyjnej" [Reading [and Entering into] the Text. On Transactional Interpretation] in *Kim jestem ja, kim jesteś ty?…*), according to which interpretation is always a certain kind of transaction: reading and entering into the spirit of a text (i.e. of what the text is saying), we simultaneously bring the text into ourselves (meaning I enter into the world of the text with the baggage of my own prejudices, experiences, worldviews, etc. which shape and form my interpretation).

this *chiasmus*, in this "relationship between two experiences, two occurrences or two languages involv[ing] double invagination."[73] And that figure of the chiasmus can in fact be seen as the radicalized (here meaning: weakened) figure of the fusion of horizons.

[73] J. Derrida, *Parages*, Paris 1986, p. 196 (quoted in: M.P. Markowski, *Efekt inskrypcji…*, p. 368; see also the interpretation of the figure of the chiasm which Markowski performs in the chapter of that book entitled "Chiazm").

KEYWORDS

GADAMER

interpretaion

hermeneutics

ABSTRACT:

The article discusses the approach to the text and the process of interpretation which we encounter in postmodern (radical) hermeneutics. It begins with a discussion ofthe concept of the text developed by Hans-Georg Gadamer, which is then confronted with the critique applied to hermeneutics by Jacques Derrida. After the recapitulation of both positions, an unexpected similarity is observed between the Gadamerian and Derridean teachings on the theme of the "ontology" of the literary work and the "nature" of the process of interpretation. Postmodern hermeneutics, on the one hand, perceives this similarity, while, on the other, it attempts to treat the "lesson of deconstruction" seriously, turning more watchful attention to the text's textuality, its trace aspect, the infinite play of meanings that renders impossible the conclusion, completion, unification or fulfilment of any hermeneutic procedures. Keeping close to the text based on postmodern hermeneutics thus involves a kind of "tracing the traces" – a pursuit of the meaning-generating play of the text and additional inscription in it of the reader's creative counter-signature. At the end of the article, the metaphor of "painfulness" or arduousness is proposed as a concept that aptly conveys the relations of radical hermeneutics with the text.

Caputo

deconstruction

text

DERRIDA

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Tangled Objects

Anna Kałuża

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 perspectivem 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: Situatonist 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 interception[4] 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. Welchamnn, "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. *Appopriation*, 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.

I.

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 Kiry 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.

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[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-centreed 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

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[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 kiszkę 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 bio-political 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]

[10]process 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

[11]We 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?

[12]Stephen 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 Neoxpression-
ism 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 con-
ceptualism 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 in-
terception of a means of expression that continues to serve conservative and reactionary ideol-
ogy. 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 ex-
pressionists, of meat – "[...] dom jak dom, / ale okolica pachniała surowym mięsem[.]"[14] In Ja-
niak'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 con-
veys 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 histori-
cally 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 problem-
atic. 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

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[13]See e.g. G. Dziamski *Przełom konceptualny i jego wpływ na praktykę i teorie 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 [...]."

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

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

[16]queen 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

[17]birds 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, omdlewam! // 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 sociopolitical 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 Podgórnik 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, Podgórnik 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 Podgórnik 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

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[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 prząśniczki 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 zeszłą 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.

[19] See. 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.

[20] I'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.]

[21] I'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] Preciely this question needs to be contemplated if we are to be tasked with interpreting Marta Podgórnik's poems.

III.

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

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[22]On 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.

[23]There 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 transcendentally, 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]

[24]See 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.beczmiana.pl/847,nie_pytaj_co_to_znaczy_zapytaj_jak_tego_uzyc.html

[26]See 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.

i n t e r c e p t i o n

Polish poetry

PIETREK

Podgórnik

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Two Commas
and a Hyphen by Krystyna Miłobędzka

Łukasz Żurek

W.,

A Comma in the Time of Writing
to nie jest
to byłoby
gdyby zdążyło być każdym
w każdej (tej, już tamtej) chwili[1]

(that is not / that would be / if it were on time to be every one / at every (this, no that) moment)

The poem that opens Krystyna Miłobędzka's book of poetry *Imiesłowy* is ruled by pronouns. Of the 15 lexical units that comprise the poem, a full six of them are pronouns, of which four are demonstrative ("to," "to," „tej," "tamtej"), and two universal ("każdym," "każdej"). The twice-repeated demonstrative pronoun "to" appears to relate to a certain absent or unrepresented object of the poetic utterance, the "that" which is never fully present and somehow can never quite be captured using a verb in the third-person singular, present tense.[2] Here our attention is seized by the fact that the poem being analyzed demands that the reader simultaneously read

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[1] K. Miłobędzka, "[to nie jest]" (that is not), in: *Zbierane, gubione 1960 –2010* (Collected, Lost 1960-2010), Wrocław 2010, p. 211. Where not indicated in a footnote, all quotations from *Imiesłowy* by Krystyna Miłobędzka in the main text of this article will be referred to by the abbreviation "ZG" followed by the relevant page number.

[2] It is also possible that the line "to nie jest" is building an intertextual relationship with the poem "TO" (THAT) by Czesław Miłosz, published in 2000 (the same year as *Imiesłowy*), wherein the poet repeatedly asserts "TO jest (…)" (THAT is…). Cz. Miłosz, "TO," in *to*, Kraków 2000, pp. 7 –8. I will leave the task of evaluating that claim to other members of the micrological community, adding only that the fundamental difference between Miłobędzka's "to" and Miłosz's "TO" has to do with the semantic baggage of both words, Where Miłobędzka sees no difference between the trivial "to" and the metaphysical "TO," Miłosz (in the work in question) differentiates strongly between them.

it as an utterance relating to extra-linguistic reality (a certain "that" beyond the poem, "is not") and language itself ("that" "is" not), which the poem's subject tries to bring as close as possible to fleeting existence.[3] This double coding imposed on reading – essentially demonstrating the inevitable cognitive failure of the subject, whose experience always evaporates when there is a desire to articulate it – constitutes a typical feature of the "poetics of the particle,"[4] whether of recording or movement,[5] which plays an important role in Miłobędzka's later work.

We should nonetheless return to the pronouns mentioned earlier – dependent parts of speech, for the execution of whose function the context of a whole utterance or situation wherein communication takes place is necessary.[6] The poem does not provide any clues that would allow the "that" (to) to be fixed to a particular referent. It may refer either to a highly concrete, singular phenomenon (as in the sentence "Look at that") or to the entirety of the sensory world ("That's all there is"). This tension between particularity and universality present in the individual word "that" when not subordinated to other parts of speech is also visible in the division, mentioned earlier, of pronouns according to their function – some ("tej", "tamtej") attempt to indicate or situate a certain object or phenomenon in time-space, while others ("każdym," "każdej") refer to all (people? animals? objects?) that exist in the whole infinity of moments.

The tension indicated above between the pronouns present in the text can also be seen in the semantics of the verb forms used in the poem. As was mentioned earlier, the poem begins with a negation of the full presence of what is experienced and a simultaneous denial of the cognitive force of verbs in the present tense.[7] In the next turns out that it constitutes the beginning of a parody, developed throughout the rest of the poem, of philosophical judgment, which, on a first reading, can be read as the choice of a "more receptive form" of line, however, a perspective opens onto an exit from the impasse. "That would be," until it turns out that it constitutes the beginning of a parody, developed throughout the rest of the poem, of philosophical judgment, can, on a first reading, be read as the choice of a "more receptive form" of linguistic expression, that will probably allow the poetic word to catch up with the world. This momentary hope for the realization of Utopia is given by a verb in the conditional mood, "expressing, containing, or implying a supposition."[8] Existence, Miłobędzka tells us, tends rather toward potentiality than simply being this-right-here. At the same time, in the Polish form,

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[3] As Aleksandra Zasępa has observed, "Miłobędzka's interest in language is a natural consequence of her interest in the world." A. Zasępa, "'Bieg myśli/Bieg słów'. Język poetycki wobec wyzwań rzeczywistości uczasowionej" ("Movement of Thoughts/Movement of Words." Poetic Language and the Challenges of Time-Specific Reality), in *Czas (w) poezji Krystyny Miłobędzkiej* (Time (in the) Poetry of Krystyna Miłobędzka), Wrocław 2016, p. 205.

[4] P. Bogalecki, *Niedorozmowy. Kategoria niezrozumiałości w poezji Krystyny Miłobędzkiej* (Unspoken Conversations. The Category of Incomprehensibility in the Poetry of Krystyna Miłobędzka), Warszawa 2011, p. 30.

[5] "Te zapisy (…)" (Those records; ZG, s. 228); "nie pisać, biec" (not write, run; ZG, s. 213).

[6] "The pivotal role performed in the grammatical texture of poetry by diverse kinds of pronouns is due to the fact that pronouns, in contradistinction to all other autonomous words, are purely grammatical, relational units [...]."R. Jakobson, *"Poetry of Grammar and Grammar of Poetry,"* in *Verbal Art, Verbal Sign, Verbal Time*, ed. Krystyna Pomorska and Stephen Rudy, Minneapolis 1985, p. 44.

[7] As Zasępa concludes, "[t]he present moment [...] is [...] the embodiment of impermanence, because, unceasingly chainging, it never leaves time to become rooted or to experience perfect happiness long-term [...]." A. Zasępa, "Nieuchwytnie" (Unattainably), in *Czas (w) poezji Krystyny Miłobędzkiej*, p. 77.

[8] Definition 2 of "conditional," Merriam-Webster Dictionary, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/conditional (accessed 23.05.2017).

meaning "that would be" (to byłoby), the past tense still resonates, a certain "was" (było), the symptom of the world's inevitable evanescence.[9] In the strange temporal structure created between the two first lines, one excluding the present, the subject of the poem – in the second required to read the next line – seems to express a belief in the possibility of capturing reality in its unfolding, by means of language.

The third and fourth lines are noticeably longer than the first two.[10] Their relative loquaciousness, in comparison to the formal condensation of the poem as a whole, can be interpreted as a sign of the collapse of an ambitious project whose goal was the creation of a poetic language that would catch up with the world. The potentiality of the conditional mood, activated in the line "to byłoby," is made concrete by the subordinate conjunction correlated with that verbal form, "gdyby" (if), which imposes on the "temporalized reality"[11] conditions that enable it to become fully current and present. An act of philosophizing that attempts to situate itself outside the world is criticized in the poem, turned topsy-turvy – the sharp edge of the critique being the parenthetical interpolation "(tej, już tamtej)" which appears in the fourth line. That is the first case in *Imiesłowy* of a device whose aim is to underscore the temporality of the poem itself, the fact that the poem is not so much something already written as something being written in the present; it thus constitutes an attempt to write "is" that is forever doomed to fall into "was."

If we were to remove that parenthetical interpolation – and the fourth line were to become "w każdej chwili" (at every moment) – the whole poem could lead the reader to the conviction that the poet reached certain conclusions, closing her reflections on the temporality of being in an extremely atemporal, stable philosophical formula. The parenthetical interpolation in question, however, makes such a reading of the work impossible. It is a symbol of a temporary split (between naming and experiencing, writing and thinking), which through the manner of its notation and its place in the line in its entirety shows what it names – it graphically dissociates the noun from the pronoun and preposition, rendering impossible the existence of such a combination of words as "at every moment," falsifying the temporal, historical nature of the experience of reality.

The parentheses surrounding both pronouns represent one of two forms of punctuation present in the poem. The other is the comma that separates "tej" from "już tamtej." Where the poet's motivation for using parentheses has been explained above, the comma demands a few additional words of commentary. First, we should consider how the end of the poem might be interpreted if it lacked the comma. The line "w każdej (tej już tamtej) chwili" could certainly still be interpreted as a critique of atemporal thought about being which somehow still always takes place in time. The meaning of the phrase in parenthesis would then undergo a small change – the first pronoun could then be treated as redundant with respect to the second, since they refer to the same ("that") moment.

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[9] Similarly in the poem "[co ja robię, patrzę w jest]" (what i'm doing, i'm looking at is): "to jestnienie/ jest nie nie" (that yesistence / is not not; ZG, p. 224).

[10] Lines 3 and 4 each have 8 syllables, while 1 and 2 have 3 and 4 respectively.

[11] This is a quotation from the chapter title in Aleksandra Zasępa's book.

The presence of the comma, however, produces the result that within the parentheses itself, introducing a temporal shift at the end of the poem, another, still more subtle division is created, as if the poet believed that she had not clearly enough underscored how word and experience miss each other.[12] Thus we are no longer dealing with one moment that passed, but with two separate micromoments, the one preceding the comma and the one that comes after it. The internal rhyme in the last line ("każd**ej**," "t**ej**," "tam**tej**"[13]), which sounds like an echo, makes the impossibility of capturing the "now" in linguistic form even more pronounced.

The comma in question is nevertheless more than just a symbol of what in the next poem in *Imiesłowy* is defined as "Odstęp od myślę do mówię" (the distance from I think to I say; ZG, p. 212). If we take into consideration the fact that the poetics of recording or "movement" that dominate the book suggests reading the text of the work as a "pursuit of the moment,"[14] then the comma can be seen as designating a pause in the recording, which is the only way to save the nonverbal, that which eludes linguistic representation. What the reader stumbles up against while reading the poem, i.e., the little punctuation mark that differentiates the semantic content of two pronouns can be interpreted as a microscopic trace of what the writing subject stumbled up against in the course of the recording-movement – of real experience.

If, as Stanisław Barańczak has said, Miłobędzka's removal of punctuation from her poetry gives the impression of "speaking on a single breath,"[15] then the comma in the poem "[to nie jest]" would be a symbol of speech that reached the point of interruption (or: breakthrough), close to what the poet writes about in this passage of self-reflexive poetics from *Imiesłowy*: "Niegotowe, niecałe [zapisy], pełno w nich dziur (gdyby chociaż świeciły pustkami)" (Unprepared, incomplete [records], full of holes [if they could at least shine as voids]; ZG, p. 228).

In the world of Miłobędzka's poetry, where each linguistic sprint across the distance between experience and speech is doomed to failure, the residue of punctuation after the encounter with the world that takes place in the poem "[to nie jest]" can be interpreted as an attempt to save within the materiality of the sign what does not fit into verbs in the present tense. One of the many holes that do not shine as a void is perhaps precisely this comma,

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[12]Piotr Bogalecki made the following observation on a similar way commas function in Miłobędzka's work (in an interpretation of the second poem in the book *Wykaz treści* [List of Contents]): "Miłobędzka does not renounce commas, but uses them in such a way as to provoke multiple versions of a reading, enabling the reader to follow several paths of understanding." P. Bogalecki, *Niedorozmowy*, p. 147.

[13]If, however, we treat the word "tam**tej**" as an exact rhyme with "**tej**," the possibility of another reading of the poem appears, running counter to the interpretation I have proposed above. The rhyme in "tamtej" – simultaneously containing, as in the case of "to byłoby," both memory of the past and leaning into the future – divides the word into "tam" and "tej." The parenthetical interpolation can thus be interpreted to be not a critique of philosophy for forgetting about existence's temporality, but an attempt to positively develop a more capacious form of pronoun, able to keep up with the vanishing moment.

[14]E. Suszek, *Szybkość, pośpiech, kompresja. „Poetyka przyśpieszenia" w poezji Krystyny Miłobędzkiej*, (Speed, Haste, Compression. The "Poetics of Acceleration" in the Poetry of Krystyna Miłobędzka), Katowice 2014, p. 8.

[15]S. Barańczak, *In statu nascendi*, in *Twórczość* (Creation) 1971, no. 9, p. 101. Quoted in: A. Zasępa, *Czas (w) poezji Krystyny Miłobędzkiej*, p. 207.

the sign separating (language/subject from the world), but also joining (language/subject to the world) exactly in the same place where the division is executed.[16]

Comma and Hyphen – Phantom-Marks

nawet gdybym zdążyła krzyknąć jestem tej najniższej chmurze

jesteś będzie już inne, w innym miejscu[17]

(even if i managed to shout i am from this lowest cloud / you are it will be already different, in a different place)

The third poem from *Imiesłowy*, quoted above, is also the second text after "[to nie jest]" in which Miłobędzka simultaneously thematizes and dramatizes the irremovable distance between language and the world. It is one of a number of later poems by Miłobędzka which (seemingly) require no commentary due to their formal simplicity. As Piotr Bogalecki has written:

> Literary critics bestowing high marks on the formal side of the poems of the author of *Imiesłowy* [...] have not concealed their astonishment that poetry descended directly from the extremely dense model of linguistic poetry following the line of Tymoteusz Karpowicz [...] could evolve into a project that is to such a large extent "reader-friendly."[18]

It is, however, worth attempting to examine this poem with a micrological magnifying glass – perhaps then we will succeed in noticing and clarifying[19] those elements in it which escape a surface reading. The first among those is the intertextual relation that is formed between "[nawet gdybym...]" and "[to nie jest]." The beginning of the poem, "nawet gdybym zdążyła," uses the same conditional mood we see in the first poem *Imiesłowy*: "gdyby zdążyło (...)" (if it happened [...]; ZG, p. 211). The change in the grammatical categories of verbs between the two poems – the shift from the impersonal and neuter "gdyby zdążyło"

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[16]"The comma is, in contemporary norms of punctuation, both Polish and Italian, the most universal punctuation mark (...) it can perform a great variety of functions, often contradictory ones." K. Foremniak, *O sztuce przestankowania w Polsce i we Włoszech: rozwój normy interpunkcyjnej od XVI wieku do współczesności* (On the Art of Punctuation in Poland and Italy: the Development of Punctuation Norms from the 16th Century to the Present), Warszawa 2014, p. 271. Adam Lipszyc draws attention to the very similar roles played by the commas in this poem and in "[to nie jest]" in his micrological interpretation of Paul Celan's poem "ERZFLITTER" (translated by Lipszyca into Polish as "ARCYBLICHTR RUDY" [ORANGE ULTRABLING]): "This comma [separating 'taciturnity' from 'lucidity'] would signify neither temporal, irreversible replacement, nor oscillation, but a paradoxical, superimposed simultaneity, this hypertextuality that splits up the ordinary temporal-spatial present, and simultaneously itself remains internally unstable and divided." A. Lipszyc, "Powrót K" (Return K), in *Czas wiersza. Paul Celan i teologie literackie* (Time of the Poem. Paul Celan and Literary Theology), Kraków-Budapest 2015, p. 192.

[17]K. Miłobędzka, *Imiesłowy*, Wrocław 2000, p. 8.

[18]P. Bogalecki, *Niedorozmowy*, p. 31.

[19]I borrow this figure of clarification, of the clarifier [objaśniacz], from Stefan Szymutko ("Po co literatura jeszcze jest? Na motywach książek Janusza Sławińskiego 'Przypadki poezji' i 'Miejsce interpretacji'" [Why Does Literature Exist? On Themes of Janusz Sławiński's Books *The Case of Poetry* and *The Place of Interpretation*], *Teksty Drugie* 2007, no. 3, pp. 142 –153), who in turn plucked it from one sentence in a text by Janusz Sławiński: "Naturally to a significant extent this relates to [the reading of contemporary poetry] [...] with professional needsm with the desire to publicly speak about what one has read – appearing in the role of their critic or clarifier" (J. Sławiński, "Zanik centrali" [The Decline of Headquarters], *Kresy* [Borderlands] 1994, no. 18, p. 14).

to the first-person, feminine "gdybym zdążyła" – is the vehicle for a change in the cognitive perspectives of the subject. Where in the first poem in *Imiesłowy*, as was mentioned above, full embodiment is expected from being, in everyone and at every moment, in the work analyzed herein the subject seeks to affirm its presence in the face of a real phenomenon – a cloud.

Looking further, we can observe other semantic shifts that take place between the two works in question. Where in the first poem it is only the parenthetical interpolation that wrecks the poetico-philsosophical undertaking, in the third poem the failure of the subject is already announced from the first words, from the amplificatory particle present in the formula "nawet gdyby." This time the conditional mood thus serves only to narrate about failure – it is just as if the end of the poem "[to nie jest]" made impossible the fulfilment of the utopia of grasping the now or even imagining it. The internal rhyme "t**ej** najniższ**ej**," constituting a repetition of the rhyme from the last line of "[to nie jest]," has the effect of further tightening the bond between the two texts, because it represents an echo of the cognitive failure of "tej, już tamtej."

At the level of play with the semantics of the visual form in which the poem is written, "[nawet gdybym…]" references the first poem in *Imiesłowy*. The temporal-spatial separation between the exclamation "jestem" and the addressee of this communication (the lowest cloud, and thus one that can be reached with a word), who is referenced in the line "jesteś będzie już inne, w innym miejscu," relates, after all, to the position of the verb form "jesteś" in relation to the previous line as well. The verb form "jestem" exclaimed in the direction of the noun "chmura" finds itself in a relatively close position to that lexical unit (and at least is not set apart from it by a parenthetical interpolation). At the same time, the verb form "jesteś" is actually in a different place ("w innym miejscu") in relation to those words – it is located at the beginning of the second line, dissociated from the textual cloud by a space of 15 syllables. The only punctuation mark in the whole two-line poem, the phantom comma that was confusing among the pronouns of "[to nie jest]," merely highlights the separation mentioned above.[20]

This fairly clear interpretation of the poem is complicated by considerations of how we should properly understand the passage "jesteś będzie już inne, w innym miejscu" in relation to the word "jestem" that precedes it. The shift from first to second person singular can be explained in a number of ways, differentiated according to which verb is accentuated.

The word "jesteś" in the second line can thus constitute a metatextual statement in which two speakers become one (X speaking about an utterance by X) despite the change in grammatical category. The poetic self expresses itself in the second person, thereby showing that the cry in the first line, supposed to confirm that self's presence, in fact separates from it and then changes into the distanced "you" of "jesteś." The speaking subject of the poem

[20]It should be noted that the performative presentation in the typography of what the poem is talking about has a close analogue in the tradition, broadly understood, of concrete poetry, referenced repeatedly – in the collections *wszystkowiersze* (everythingpoems), *Przesuwanka* (A Displacin') and *Dwanaście wierszy w kolorze* (Twelve Poems in Color) – by Miłobędzka.

would thus become other in a different place – the final part of the work would then be a kind of *hypallage*, in which properties usually ascribed to clouds (variability of shape and continuous mobility) would be transferred to the subject.[21] A completely different interpretation is also possible – one in which the cry of "jestem" has the purpose of affirming the presence not only of the self, but also of the lowest cloud. "Jesteś" would then be the "you" called into being by the mere intention of the subject's crying out. The cloud, however, continually changes shape and continues to move, so that the verb in the present tense (of which we know from "[to nie jest]") does not exactly fit for describing such an evanescent phenomenon.

The poem in no way allows us to judge which of the interpretations offered above of the relationship between "jestem" and "jesteś" is more on point – and that is not the point here. "Zapisać bieg myśli bieg słów w biegnącym świecie" (To write down the flow of thoughts the flow of words in a flowing world; ZG, p. 212) can only be done by rendering the poem polysemic, so that the reversible relationship of subject and object remained in constant movement.

<p style="text-align:center">***</p>

The work "[nawet gdybym...]," like the entire collection *Imiesłowy*, was reprinted in the book *zbierane (1960 –2005)* (collected works [1960-2005]), published by *Biuro Literackie* in 2006, containing all of Miłobędzka's books of poetry beginning with *Anaglify* (Anaglyphs) up to *Po krzyku* (After the Scream).[22] A very small change made by the poet to this poem in that version[23] drastically complicates our previous analysis. In the 2006 version, the work goes as follows:

> nawet gdybym zdążyła krzyknąć jestem tej najniższej chmu-
> rze, jesteś będzie już inne, w innym miejscu (ZG, p. 214)

> (even if i managed to shout i am to this lowest clo- / ud, you are it will be already different, in a different place)

The fragmentation of the word "chmurze" into two syllables separated by a hyphen and the addition of the comma after the second of those syllables – this is the minute but monumental difference between the "[nawet gdybym...]" 2000 and 2006 versions. The first change significantly influences the flow of the whole (extremely short) work, because such a procedure's

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[21]Barbara Sienkiewicz writes fascinatingly on the avant-garde adventures of *hypallage* and the philosophical implications of the figure in her article *"Prawdziwy koniec* hypallage?" (The Real End of *Hypallage*?; *Teksty Drugie* 2002, no. 3, pp. 212 –222).

[22]It appeared in the same form five years later in the book *zbierane, gubione (1960 –2010)* (collected, lost [1960-2010]), supplemented with *gubione* from 2008. We may treat as a curiosity rather than an interpretative trail to pursue (even a micrological one) the fact that the cover of *zbierane, gubione* designed by Jan Jaromir Aleksiun, depicts a comma separating two words, enlarged to enormous dimensions so that it occupies the entire centre of the composition.

[23]And not only to this one – the second person singular pronoun in the poem "[z twoimi rękami...]" ([with your hands...]) shifts from being capitalized ("złóż mnie z samych Ty" [assemble me from Yous only]), to being lower-case like the rest of the poem in the versions in both *zbierane* and *zbierane, gubione*.

effect on the modulation of the rhythm is more tumultuous than, for example, enjambment. So that instead of fluidly shifting from one line to the next, we stumble into the hyphen hanging at the end of the line, which interrupts the subject's utterance in the exact middle of a word. It is notable that this interruption performs a function similar to the parenthetical interpolation we discussed in "[to nie jest]" – it performatively shows the temporal dispersal of articulation and experience. Before the reader finishes reading the second stanza of the work, she or he can observe in the text's notation that "jesteś będzie już inne, w innym miejscu," and that a syllable of the word "chmurze" appears to escape from the verb in present tense. The division of the word into two syllables also has the effect that the ambiguity mentioned above in the relationship between "jestem" and "jesteś" is not so much negated as it is pushed off into the semantic background. It is perfectly evident that what undergoes change in the space of the poem is the textual cloud, rather than the articulating subject – because the cloud is stratified into separate syllables.

What other effects does the separation of the word "chmurze" serve to create? What matters is not the question of the motivation behind such micro-changes, which we have no way of finding out, but rather what they can add to our interpretation of "[nawet gdybym...]," knowing as we do how they affect its multiplicity of meanings. In keeping with the lcues we have found, let us focus on the cloud. In our earlier interpretation of the poem, the adjective "najniższej" was understood as describing a certain extratextual cloud remembered by the poet. It allowed us to conceive of a spatialization, unspoken within the poem itself, of the word "jestem," which due to the fact that the cloud is located lowest, could manage to reach it. The breakup of the word into two syllables placed in two separate lines suggests, however, a different, considerably more intratextual reading. So because the lowest cloud may be considered to be the second syllable of "chmurze," "-rze," as it has shifted to the second line and is set apart from the now overhanging (and therefore certainly no longer lowest) syllable "chmu." This broken, semantically non-autonomous lexical particle, being a symbol of the intrusion of temporality (from which, in the world of Miłobędzka's poetry, there is no escape) into the poem, could thus point to the fact that within this one poem there is a chance of saving a certain experience.

It turns out that the moment of clear confirmation of cognitive failure (a change in the shape of the word signifying a cloud at a moment before the assertion of its absolute variability, i.e., an admission of failure) becomes a chance to capture in language what has run away, what has dissipated. The inherent paradox stems from the fact that the trace remaining from an encounter with the external world – similarly as in "[to nie jest]" – is often a result of the text, which leaves in its wake only a comma, hyphen or fractured syllables.[24] Perhaps that is enough, too, for us to bring into being, in our micrological analysis, the postulate expressed by Miłobędzka in the self-reflexive work mentioned above: "Gdyby ktoś przeczytał to zapisane i to niezapisane" (If somebody read all of this written and unwritten material; ZG, p. 228).

[24]Aleksandra Zasępa, referencing Tymoteusz Karpowicz, writes of Miłobędzka's use of a "method based on reification of the text. The objectification of speech can be revealed to represent the most perfect opportunity for translating the world." A. Zasępa, *Czas (w) poezji Krystyny Miłobędzkiej*, p. 212.

Epilogue – Melancholia of the Micrologue, Post-Comma

There is another possible explanation for the changes to the poem "[to nie jest]" examined above, one considerably more down-to-earth and, unfortunately, also potentially destructive of the whole earlier interpretation. Thus both the breakup of the word "chmurze" into two separate syllables, and the placement of the comma after "rze" could simply render the text a complex sentence, in keeping with the rules of Polish punctuation (the added comma just sets one predicate apart from another). We cannot rule out that these small changes were entered by a copy editor's hand, or that it was important for Miłobędzka for the work to be interpreted as a text with a slightly different status from the rest.[25] We cannot rule out the possibility that our entire analysis of two poems from *Imiesłowy* has in fact all been one big philological farce.

Aleksander Nawarecki's remark, according to which in a structuralist analysis "[t]he autonomy of the detail [...] is momentary, and actually illusory,"[26] relates to a great many micro-textual analyses. All such analyses take delight in "mannered meticulousness" and "blind pedantry,"[27] representing, in the opinion of the Silesian scholar, the immanent temptation of philology.[28] Overvaluing the importance of the detail or exaggerating the semiotic freight of the individual sign nevertheless represents a risk in every kind of philological practice, all of which, Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht claims, "in different ways... generate desires for presence, desires for a physical and space-mediated relationship to the things of the world (including texts) [...]."[29]

Perhaps that is the reason why Nawarecki, in a marginal (footnote) passage, though one argued with intense philological passion in his article "Mikrologia, genologia, miniature" (Micrology, Study of Genres, Miniature), which opens the first volume of the series *Miniatura i mikrologii* (Miniature and Micrology) from 2000, appears to nullify the very question about the falsification of micrological discoveries:

> It is not entirely [...] apparent what differentiates the two classes of remnants, at the surface level simply opposites: treasures and trash. For each true collector (or philologist or art historian) it remains an open question. Because, appearances to the contrary, there is no certainty in dividing them, only the possibility of a two-sided exchange. [...] It is particularly easy to disregard fragments that are severely damaged or particularly slight. Such is the status of a remainder, including the remainder from a calculation, whose frailty makes it invisible, insignificant and in the

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[25] Szymutko adds his two cents on the potential fallibility of micrological readings: "To search for the extraordinary in the ordinary is a form of naïveté, for where is it supposed to come from? The mere formulations – expecting the unexpected, predicting the unpredictable, waiting for the unexpected ... – sound absurd, since nothing so miraculous can happen, ca n chance to occur in literature's well-regulated language." S. Szymutko, *Po co literatura jeszcze jest?*, p. 145.

[26] A. Nawarecki, "Mikrologia, genologia, miniatura" (Micrology, Study of Genres, Miniature) in *Miniatura i mikrologia* (Miniature and Micrology) vol.1, ed. Nawarecki, Katowice 2000, p. 15.

[27] Ibid., p. 16. I have altered the quoted passage slightly to make it fit my sentence.

[28] Ibid., p. 18.

[29] H.U. Gumbrecht, *The Powers of Philology: Dynamics of Textual Scholarship*, Urbana-Chicago 2003, p. 7.

end dooms it to the annihilation called rounding-off. But in fact that **remainder in the distant places after the comma**, though deemed null and void, does not cease to exist.[30]

Rendering visible, if only for a moment, such details as two commas and a hyphen present in a work by a poet of such secure renown in Polish literature as Miłobędzka, is undoubtedly worth the risk of descending into the ridiculous.

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[30]A. Nawarecki, *Mikrologia, genologia, miniatura*, p. 21. Emphasis mine. Thirty years earlier, in a decidedly different language and style of thought, Jakobson anticipated Nawarecki: „A calculus of probability as well as an accurate comparison of poetic texts with other kinds of verbal messages demonstrates that the striking particularities in the poetic selection, accumulation, juxtaposition, distribution, and exclusion of diverse phonological and grammatical classes cannot be viewed as negligible accidentals governed by the rule of chance." R. Jakobson, "Subliminal Verbal Patterning in Poetry," in *Verbal Art, Verbal Sign, Verbal Time*, Minneapolis 1985, p. 59.

KEYWORDS

m i c r o l o g y

l i n g u i s t i c   p o e t r y

Abstract:

This interpretative essayistic article is devoted to a detailed micrological analysis of Krystyna Miłobędzka's poems in her book *Imiesłowy* (Participles). The author attempts to show how three punctuation signs – two commas and one hyphen – can diametrically alter the surface interpretation of a work in the event of such seemingly minor details being omitted. In his conclusion, the author raises the question of whether it is possible, within a micrological analysis, to speak of separating interpretation from the philologist-collector's pure overinterpretation.

KRYSTYNA MIŁOBĘDZKA

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Micrology
as a Tool of Literary Theoretical Practice. A Case Study Using Erskine Caldwell's *Journeyman*

Małgorzata Dorna

From the Notes of a Scholar of "Micro" Forms

> I was not a writer to begin with; I was a listener. In those early decades of the century, reading and writing were not common experiences. Oral storytelling was the basis of fiction.

> Erskine Caldwell[1]

> I'm not interested in plots. I'm interested only in the characterization of people and what they do. [...] I never know how anything is going to end. All I ever know is the first line, the first sentence, the first page. The work terminates itself with dictation from me. Signs and portents indicate in some manner that a conclusion is just around the corner. -

> Erskine Caldwell[2]

It seems obvious that the pleasure of writing (like the pleasure of any form of artistic creation) consists of an incessant joy in weaving plots (as was asserted by Sigmund Freud, the father of psychoanalysis), engaging in the act (so beloved of E. Caldwell) of "storytelling," the act of narration, that not only allows memories and sometimes obsessions or fears to be concretized, but also makes liberation from them possible. Perhaps precisely in this skillful weaving of plots, rendering readers' experience of them comparable to reading nonfiction or documentary texts, lies the seductive power of the prose of Erskin Caldwell, one of the most highly-rated American twentieth century writers, next to William Faulkner and Ernest Hemingway.

[1] E. P. Broadwell, W. R. Hoag, *Erskine Caldwell, The Art of Fiction* [w] The Paris Review, 1983/No 62, https://www.theparisreview.org/interviews/3098/erskine-caldwell-the-art-of-fiction-no-62-erskine-caldwell (accessed: 31 January 2017)

[2] Ibid.

His narrative is composed of a series of interconnected (not necessarily in terms of plot, but most often through the character of the narrator) sequences of scenes and of images segueing fluidly from one to the next, the interpretation and description of which becomes not only a matter of "metapsychology," as psychoanalysis has sometimes been called,[3] but also for hermeneutics, studying the work in isolation, or for phenomenology, when we accord a work the status of an individual existence, carrying out its concretization and, in effect, its transcendence as well. Because we get to know the narrative (as with any polyphonic work of art) in an intentional way, discovering successive layers, taking both the real, literal meaning when particular images or scenes are associated with a concrete event, character, place and time, and the metaphorical meaning which emerges from the existence of unarticulated thoughts, insinuations, and, importantly, from the presence of what are known as layers or places of "indefinition."[4]

It is thus no accident that in performing an (unavoidably perfunctory) analysis of the concept of the ontology of the work according to Roman Ingarden, a contemporary theoretician underscores that Ingarden's concept must be read as including "two perspectives of intentional inspection: of the literary work existing in life (existential ontology) and the literary work perceived in an always individual, unrepeatable way (aesthetic concretization)."[5]

It seems that from the point of view of micropoetics that kind of subjective examination, involving concretization and simultaneous experience, identification with the narrating subject – possesses fundamental importance.

From there only one step remains to be taken toward a thematic critique, interested not so much in archetypes, symbols, and motives as poetic images perceived by the reader, as Jan Błoński desired- "clearly, in rapture"[6] or, in other words, in a state of merging with the psyche and world of the author (or sometimes of the narrator and author in one person), with the apprehended microcosm (step-by-step) as an instance of independent, separate, individual existence.

We can thus accept that micrology (the study of that which is small, insignificant, minor) or micropoetics (a fundamentally deceptive term, one difficult to define precisely and whose theoretical connotations are hard to pin down, as readers can learn for themselves by reading the Aleksander Nawarecki's essay on "black micrology")[7] grows out of the literary studies tradition that took shape after what is commonly called the "anti-Positivist breakthrough,"

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[3] This term has been used with reference to the literary-theoretical consequences of Freud's teachings by the authors of one of the most popular contemporary textbooks of poetics: A. Burzyńska and M. P. Markowski in *Teorie literatury XX-tego wieku* (Literary Theories of the 20th Century), Warszawa 2006, p. 47

[4] P. Szydeł, "Fikcja literacka oraz prawda w dziele literackim w polskich badaniach teoretycznoliterackich" (Literary Fiction and Truth in the Literary Work in Polish Literary-Theoretical Studies) in *Pobocza* (Side-spaces), No. 4–5, August 1999, http://kwartalnik-pobocza.pl/pob08/pasz4.html (accessed: 27 January 2017)

[5] B. Garlej, "Koncepcja warstwowości dzieła literackiego Romana Ingardena ujęta w perspektywie ontologii egzystencjalnej i jej konsekwencja" (Ingarden's Conception of Layering of Literary Works Viewed from an Existential Ontology Perspective and Its Consequence) in *Estetyka i Krytyka* (Aesthetics and Criticism) 33 (2/14), p. 115

[6] This is a reference to the title of an essay in book form by Jan Błoński, *Widzieć jasno w zachwyceniu* (Seeing Lucidly in Enchantment), PIW, Warszawa 1965, in which this beautiful phrase means something more than perceiving the text through intense emotion in moments of illumination or revelation.

[7] A. Nawarecki, "Czarna mikrologia" (Black Micrology) in *Skala mikro w badaniach literackich* (The Micro Scale in Literary Studies), ed. A. Nawarecki and M. Bogdanowska, Katowice 2005, pp. 9–25

when it was acknowledged that literary theory demands the elaboration of its own scholarly tools, different from those used in the natural sciences.

The encounter with a particular text, a close, penetrating gaze into it and analysis of it through the prism of micrology or micropoetics (or nanopoetics, to reference the terminology of the natural sciences) – all of that has been defined (with a somewhat jocular air of mystification, imitating an encyclopaedia entry) in the essay by A. Nawarecki cited above. Following in the tracks of the reflections of one continuator of thematic criticism,[8] Nawarecki turns his attention to concrete motifs (images) and to how they are subjectively interpreted, determined not only by the personality of the reader, but also by the aesthetic of the text and the apparent personality of the writer.

In the process there arises a certain aggregate or arsenal of scholarly tools and genre determinants of the work, all with equal claims to legitimacy. The former include a close perspective of interpretation (standing "face to face" with the text) and a lack of the need to invoke a broad context of meanings, or symbols, motifs and topoi that are also present in other works, or finally, conventions and aesthetics dominant in a particular period or epoch. The former constitute a somewhat larger group: the small size of the work, the intimacy of thought and reflection, the lack of a pre-defined system (for example, a sequence of images ordered by means of a logical or narrative-based "key"), the belief in the importance of the particular case or event, and in the significance of everyday activities that are seemingly unimportant, perceived in the "here and now," sometimes without authorial commentary.

Micropoetics, it is worth noting once more, seems to rule out everything that is located outside the text being analyzed, for the needs of whose interpretation there ought to be developed an aggregate of tools (potentially inscribed in the work), enabling the interpretation of the phenomenon of recurring images, symbols, metaphors, and thus everything that determines the characters' existence and their "individual fate," determines the beauty of a destiny perceived in a personal, subjective manner. The world of the micronovel, referring to the conventions of "storytelling," is based on the creation of a solid, aesthetically recognizable structure, composed of crumbs, fragments, narrative trifles, presented in a form that is almost that of documentary reporting, free from commentary and evaluation. This type of "splinters," fragments of what is called "the literature of fact," based on a blow-by-blow, a fragmentary reportage, on a specific construct of narrator, who enters into the characters' world fully and utterly, so as to experience their life brutally, "without anaesthetic."

If we accept, with Ewelina Suszek, that "Silesian literary micrology, interested in what is small, insignificant and ephemeral, inscribes itself within a certain general tendency",[9] then the diminutive dimensions of Erskine Caldwell's novel *Journeyman* fit perfectly into that tendency or perhaps new current, increasingly and ever more vividly present in the context of contemporary criticism and literary theory.

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[8] A. Nawarecki here mentions Przemysław Czapliński, author of the book *Mikrologia ze śmiercią. Motywy tanatyczne we współczesnej literaturze polski* (Micrologues with Death. Thanatological Motifs in Contemporary Polish Literature) as a precursor in the attempt to look at a short text from a close perspective.

[9] E. Suszek, "Moda na małe? Innowacyjność śląskiej mikrologii literackiej" (A Fashion for the Small? The Innovation of Silesian Literary Micrology), *Postscriptum Polonistyczne*, 2016/1 (17), p. 180

The fundamental condition here is always (as with the case of thematic criticism) the scholar's identification with the text, an identification which is in fact difficult since it can only be achieved by means of rejecting or limiting the ballast of antecedent knowledge, whether pertaining to literary history or theory. The work of art in this context becomes a phenomenon that demands hermeneutic description, rigorous reading, interpretation conducted phase-by--phase, layer-by-layer, using "single-use" tools whose use outside of the context of the particular text analyzed most often turns out to be fruitless.

In the latter half of the twentieth century, a kind of vogue prevailed in Poland for the literature of the American south, and in particular, the stories of Erskine Caldwell, which were adapted relatively frequently for the theatre and television. The Polish premiere of *Jenny* took place in July 1968 at the Teatr Dramatyczny in Warsaw, directed by Witold Skaruch; in March 1971 Teatr Telewizji showed *God's Little Acre*, directed by Ireneusz Kanicki; and a few months later, in June 1971, selected episodes from *Journeyman* were dramatized in a production featuring a star-studded cast, directed by Gustaw Holoubek.

Even then it was well-known that Caldwell's prose (strongly expressive, compact, dense in content) "worked" beautifully on the stage. That, however, does not mean that such texts as *Journeyman* (1935),[10] *Tobacco Road* (1932), *God's Little Acre* (1933) and *Trouble in July* (1940) were not perceived merely as aggregates of well-written, "beefed-up" bits of reportage on life in the countryside, tied together by means of the main characters and the specific features of the places described. It is precisely those places the people inhabiting them, and the means of narration, that evoked the stylistics of overheard, remembered stories, and the dramatisation of the characters' behaviour that made Caldwell's prose an exceptional phenomenon within contemporary literature.

The Storytelling Method – Scenes from Provincial Life

Telling a story, or, perhaps better, "weaving a story," seems to be one of the oldest existing forms (in the domain of popular literature) of utterance, seen thriving particularly in small, hermetic communities, living at a significant cultural and societal remove from everything that we tend to call "civilization." The protagonists of stories told in the oral tradition, people with firm roots in the collective consciousness of the group or local community, of which the narrator or storyteller (in view of his manner of perceiving small, seemingly unimportant matters, of no concern to those looking "in from the outside") is also a member, usually appear more "real" than the characters we find in the pages of "literary fiction." Caldwell was aware of that fact and relatively frequently touched on that question in the interviews where he commented on his writing technique: "If you let a person grow like that, little by little, you will have a character that is believable and maybe memorable to the reader."[11]

In practice this means primarily that the person telling a story not only describes its world, taking on the point of view of a character (which often occurs in more conventional literary fiction), but also possesses a certain "insight" into the characters' psyche, is present in situations

[10]Translated into Polish in 1959 by Krzysztof Zarecki as *Sługa boży* (literally the Servant of God).

[11]E. P. Broadwell, W. R. Hoag, *Erskine Caldwell, The Art of Fiction*, op. cit. (accessed: 1 February 2017)

in which a character talks to himself, engages in conjectures, wonders, considers, in which cases the use of the past tense is helpful, possessing as it does a somewhat different dimension in paradocumentary prose (of which storytelling can pass as an example) than in conventional literary fiction.[12] Furthermore, events that seemingly belong to the past acquire (in the consciousness of the listener) the status of events taking place before his eyes, practically in the "here and now," which also results from the use of techniques of prose dramatization. What we are talking about here is thus a "change in narrative perspective," a phenomenon also referred to in analyses of texts inspired by reportage and "new journalism," which perspective endows marginal, insignificant matters, or behaviours on the part of characters that we might well overlook in the context of a more traditional form of narration, with added weight.[13]

You learned by listening around the store, around the gin, the icehouse, the wood yard, or wherever people congregated and had nothing to do, Caldwell recalled. *You would listen for the extraordinary, the unusual; the people knew how to tell stories orally in such a way that they could make the smallest incident, the most far-fetched idea, into something extraordinarily interesting. It could be just a rooster crowing at a certain time of night or morning. It's a mysterious thing. Many Southern writers must have learned the art of storytelling from listening to oral tales.*[14] The prose texts that took shape in this way, usually small in size, shorter than a multi-layered novel, which were connected by the use of recognizable elements of writing craft typical of New Journalism, such as: scene-by-scene construction, the inclusion of entire dialogues lending not only plausibility but also dramatization to events, the use of a "third-person point of view," and the consolidation of details documenting the characters' life status.[15]

In the real world, in the situations referred to by Caldwell in the above quotation, storytelling ordinarily begins as a presentation of an event that arouses the curiosity of the audience, forcing the listener to sharpen his attention and concentration, just as might happen when listening to a well-constructed reportage. It is thus no accident that *Journeyman* begins with a scene in which Clay Horey, sitting as usual on the porch of his house, where he sits "week after week, year after year," witnesses, through "the glare of the sun on white sand," something completely unexpected as he squints his eyes: a "mud-spattered rattletrap of an automobile" coming to a stop out front.[16]

At that exact moment Clay begins talking to himself, complaining and grumbling, listening closely to the familiar noises that the reader recognizes together with the character. We thus hear "the jabbering of a jaybird and the screech of a tightening plowshare," as we wonder, right along with Clay, what "man in the whole world […] would come from that direction, and at that time of day," when his eyes are misted over from the heat and a pot of hot chicory, that

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[12] J. Jeziorska-Haładyj, *Tekstowe wykładniki fikcji*, Instytut Badan Literackich PAN, Warszawa 2013, pp. 142–143

[13] The term "change in narrative perspective" (*zmiana perspektywy narracyjnej*) has been used by (among others) K. Frukacz, "Amerykańskie nowe dziennikarstwo po polsku? Transfer poetyk, problemy adaptacyjne" (American New Journalism, Polish-Style? Problems of Adaptation in the Transfer of Poetics) in *Biblioteka Postscriptum Polonistycznego*, No 5/2015, pp. 53–55

[14] E. Caldwell, quoted in: S. W. Lindberg, *Słowo wstępne, The Stories of Erskine Caldwell*, The University of Georgia Press, Georgia -Athens- London 1996, p. 13

[15] K. Frukacz, "Amerykańskie nowe dziennikarstwo po polsku?"*, p. 54

[16] E. Caldwell, *Journeyman*, New York 2011, e-book edition.

"doggone old chicory" which is no match for "a jug of corn." Thus before we meet the person who has arrived in the automobile, before we resent his peremptory way of speaking and are taken aback by his dilapidated, dusty black clothes, we already know that "It can't be so doggone much of anybody" and "If it is, he's way off his track."[17]

Thus, Caldwell's micronovel begins with a short, no-nonsense description, a simple factual statement: "The mud-spattered rattletrap of an automobile rolled off the road and came to a dead stop beside the magnolia tree. The tall gaunt-looking man who looked as if he had been living on half-rations since the day he was weaned sat grim and motionless, with his hands gripped around the steeringwheel."[18]

The passage seems strangely familiar, because it resembles both the classic style of utterance typical of paradocumentary literature (colloquial language, forcible and simultaneously economic), known to Polish readers from the prose of Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood*,[19] a bestseller in its time, and the realia (stylistically very different) of John Steinbeck's drawn-out, almost sentimental epics.[20] It is true that in Caldwell's prose, instead of the Ford (freighted with symbolism in the literature of the South) we hear an incessantly failing "rattle-trap," a car whose make is unknown and difficult to determine, usually "without water in the radiator, and with not much oil in the crankcase," and in which "the backward-running engine [...] begins to wind up [...] of its own accord after the switch has been turned off," coughing and sputtering, "with a whirr like the breaking of the mainspring in an alarm clock," an engine whose insistent sounds can only be drowned out by "an earsplitting backfire in the shattered exhaust pipe."[21]

What becomes much more important here than the make of the car (if we look at the whole scene through the prism of the text's specific dramaturgy) is the fact itself of its (the crumbling rattle-trap's) extremely noisy entrance into the (hitherto peaceful and quiet) living space of Clay Horey, a naïve, good soul who looks at the surrounding world from the perspective of his porch or veranda, sometimes through a hole in the boards of the mended barn that belongs to his equally goodhearted neighbour, Tom, a corn producer.

It seems that precisely that perspective, involving observation of the external world in relation to a character's experiences (an inhabitant of the isolated, hermetic South) from a particular point, always from the same place – gives the dimension of reportorial verisimilitude to the characters who appear in the text. Caldwell often underscored that he only wrote about people he actually knew, whom he observed "as they really lived, moved, talked" and whose way of seeing reality became his own.[22]

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[17]Ibid.

[18]Ibid.

[19]T. Capote, *In Cold Blood*, New York 1965.

[20]J. Steinbeck, *The Grapes of Wrath*, New York 1996.

[21]E. Caldwell, *Journeyman,* op. cit.

[22]D. Brinkley, "He Loved the South, but Painted Its Evils in Words," *The New York Times*, 17 December 2003, http://www.nytimes.com/2003/12/17/books/he-loved-the-south-but-painted-its-evils-in-words.html (accessed: 2 February 2017)

His prescription for literary success seems utterly natural and simple from today's perspective, in a cultural context which long since assimilated the concept of the New Journalism:[23] don't wait for inspiration, take notes on everyday occurrences as a daily correspondent does, don't take any interest in what others are publishing, write short, pithy texts, listening acutely to the speech rhythms of those whose stories turn into the canvas of your narrative.[24]

So we find that Caldwell (as befits a "born" reporter) hurries after his characters following their every step. He leaves the porch with Clay to ask the newly arrived stranger who he is, perceives his "leather-skinned face" that "looked as if it had been sprayed with brown paint" and finally hears the visitor's reluctant introduction: "My name's Semon Dye [...] What's yours?"[25]

At the moment of this unusual self-presentation Semon does not even attempt to maintain an appearance of social propriety: he begins appraising Clay's property with a professional eye, asking the kind of unceremonious questions that a bailiff in court asks before an auction begins.

It thus appears that from the very beginning, Caldwell (deliberately seeking to dramatize his text) relies on contrasts: the sound of the engine against the blazing hot morning, the black clothing of the stranger and the white of the sandy, abandoned, rather sleepy road covered with clouds of dust, the naïveté and gullibility of Clay in collision with the haughtiness and insolence of Dye. And then there is the latter's hand, stiff "as though it were a pole wrapped in an oldcoat," held out unexpectedly in a gesture of greeting against Clay's hand, which "fell against [his] thigh like a bag of buckshot."[26] It is also perfectly logical that this suggestive opening scene that plays out by the wooden porch were Clay is accustomed to sit contains the dramaturgy typical of New Journalism, defined by Tom Wolfe as follows: "It seemed all-important to be there when dramatic scenes took place, to get the dialogue, the gestures, the facial expressions, the details of the environment. [...] Eventually I, and others, would be accused of 'entering people's minds' [...] But exactly! I figured that was one more doorbell a reporter had to push."[27]

When consistently followed, the procedure of using a close-up narratorial perspective, involving the dramatization of events and attribution of particular importance to them, is additionally underlined with grotesque and irony, as well as expressiveness, clarity and intensity in the characters' behaviour, where each of them sticks to his assigned role: on the one hand, the naïve "good soul," the poor farmer leading a hitherto quiet life (Clay Horey); on the other, the ruthless, cynical scoundrel who arrives unannounced in front of your house (Semon Dye). Everything here is stamped with dramatic intensity: Clay's short, crisp utterances as he talks to himself in an "aside" like an actor in an amateur theatre, the distinct profile of Semon Dye,

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[23]T. Wolfe, "The Birth of 'The New Journalism'"; New York, 14 February 1972. , http://nymag.com/news/media/47353/index9.html (accessed 27 May 2017).

[24]E. T. Arnold, *Conversations with Erskine Caldwell*, University Press of Mississippi, USA 1988, pp. 246–247

[25]E. Caldwell, *Journeman*, op. cit.

[26]Ibid.

[27]T. Wolfe, "The Birth of 'The New Journalism,'" op. cit.

who solemnly demands that others recognize him as "a man of God" and who, in his decisive, brusque, rather painful gestures (as when he does not hesitate to jab poor Clay between the ribs with his bony finger or crush his hand in a numbing, seemingly endless handshake) imposes admiration and respect for his person, dirty and highly suspicious though he may be, covered with dust and dressed in a worn-out capote.

Thus, we see in action both the age-old model of tragedy in action as developed within hermeneutics and grasped in the categories of the "aesthetics of the tragic,"[28] and the model (familiar from the dramas of classical antiquity) of the struggle between good and evil inscribed in the fate of the human being, "eased" slightly by the workings of Fate, whose personification and messenger, its unsettling and intriguing embodiment, is none other than Semon Dye. In the context of the micronovel, this "tragic conflict" becomes endowed, in addition, with a characteristic aspect of irony, dark humour, and grotesque, which Caldwell achieves through the collision of the solemn and sublime with the trivial, the pathos and rhetoric of "church" discourse (skilfully deployed by Dye) with the bluntness of the colloquial speech style of farmers, sometimes called "white trash" (a term containing obvious racism against blacks) and the language of the Afro-Americans who work on Clay's property.

And yet the presence of a journeyman preacher in prose of the "school" called the "literature of the South" should not fundamentally surprise anyone. What is surprising, then, is not its presence but the meaning ascribed to that presence, not particular scenes, but the value attached to those scenes. Caldwell, raised in the family of a poor Presbyterian minister, who wandered the sandy roads and byways of Georgia in a beat-up automobile, would reminisce years later about the crucial role played amid the hermetic, isolated communities of cotton and tobacco planters by the "country minister," endowed with a close relationship to "the raw ingredients of life" visible in birth and death, "because a minister was everything: a sociologist, an adviser, psychiatrist," and, in the case of Caldwell's father at least, someone who "understood poverty in a way that an outsider who comes in to look at it cannot."[29] That is doubtless why the figure of a "lay preacher (as Semon calls himself) takes on certain shades of demonism, because he is a preacher "from hell" who will stop at nothing to satisfy the craving for conversion of all those who have "the devil […] in them."[30]

The drama that began, as we saw, with the dramatic arrival of Semon Dye plays out in a handful of equally powerful scenes, and the time of its duration is kept to a minimum: a few mild April days, lasting until a Sunday evening, when, after a sermon lasting several hours, delivered in a local schoolhouse, the character disappears forever. A whole sequence of short, expressive scenes begins with the moment when the self-styled preacher, who presents himself with the proud title of a "man of God," takes final control over the life and property of the initially somewhat mistrustful Clay. It was in fact Clay Horey himself who declared with

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[28]See the definition of the tragic developed by Maria Janion, presented in her essay collection *Romantyzm, rewolucja, marksizm. Colloquia Gdańskie* (Romanticism, Revolution, Marxism. Gdańsk Colloquia)*, Gdańsk 1972, pp. 13–91

[29]A. Lelchuk, R. White, "An Interview with Erskine Caldwell," in *Conversations with Erskine Caldwell*, ed. E. T. Arnold, Jackson 1988, pp. 83–84.

[30]E. Caldwell*, Journeyman,* op. cit.

outrage and bombast at the outset: "Damn the man who'd drive right spang up [...] and let loose a stink like that!"[31]

That thought is later revealed to be the key to understanding the text, and is yet more on point in that over the course of the narrative, such an opinion, expressed by Clay with anger, with a sense of his own helpessness and powerlessness, grows to reach practically the level of a universal maxim. It is noteworthy that, "the man" drives up (where from, nobody knows, with the inevitability of Fate, like the verdict of a cruel and implacable destiny) and captures everything for himself: the heart of shy young Dene, Clay's last wife, who the preacher has no trouble "emboldening," the well-kept car that he wins in a game of dice together with the whole farm, a keepsake watch and a small amount of credit taken in anticipation of the next year's harvest. "The man" drives up and casually seduces the mulatta servant "Sweet," who is beautiful and aware of her beauty, at the same time, quarrelling with her fiancé, Hardy, at whom he fires a gun, calmly, almost reluctantly, not shooting to kill, only to scare him a little.

And, finally, "the man" drives up and demoralizes the whole town of Rocky Comfort, driving out the alleged devils who have harassed the townspeople for years, in the process making an emotional show, a display worthy of a contemporary performance artist, turning his own body into not so much an avant-garde "art object" as the object of a kind of barbaric, primeval cult. He defeats ubiquitous evil, delivers an epic sermon lasting hours (observing all the rules of rhetoric), leads the townsfolk in a mass orgy, the better to "praise God," simultaneously experiencing ecstasies, animalistic joy at participating in the age-old rite of sacrifice, fulfilment and redemption. He is accompanied at all points by the narrator, who, quotes his words with reportorial exactitude, not permitting himself any kind of commentary, even when Dye is addressing a group of women who are hungry for new experiences, at first terrified, then ready to do practically anything he asks: "The Lord told me how wicked you folks in Rocky Comfort are [...] We want you in heaven. We need you there. In heaven we want all the beautiful girls and women now in Georgia."[32] A short and pithy commentary appears just a few pages further on, when the narrative (referring to basic knowledge in the field of social psychology) attempts to explain the behaviour of the townspeople in one sentence without evaluating or interpreting it: "A few people in Rocky Comfort considered themselves already saved, and wished all their neighbors to be denied the pleasures that they themselves had forsworn."[33]

We should also pay attention to the fact that Semon Dye is presented from two different narrative perspectives: first as a character in a reportage on life in the countryside of the American South, a swindler and crook, ably taking advantage of the naïveté of simple farmers, drinking corn liquor with them and looking at the world, like them, through a hole in the barn timber, and then (in keeping with the principles of the aesthetics of tragedy) as a strong, intriguing personality, acting according to the rules of the game he himself has designated. Semon is not, in the end, the Almighty, even if he is happy to claim an intimate relationship with the Lord. He is God's humble servant, or perhaps his mighty servant, but

[31]Ibid.
[32]Ibid.
[33]Ibid.

in any case, subject to the laws he proclaims. He is unmasked by the moment (shown against the background of the mass orgy in which the townspeople take enthusiastic part) when his physiognomy, the physiognomy of a "lay preacher" undergoes a peculiar transformation and we see him through the eyes of the enthralled crowd, when none other than Semon Dye, in the throes of erotic ecstasy, "was sprawling on the floor, writhing and kicking [...], as though each successive movement would be his last on earth."[34]

So in fact the appearance of the preacher, because of the scene quoted above, which fulfils the function of a dramaturgical counterpoint in the linear narrative, has (if looked at from the perspective of the text as a whole) a dimension not only of "scandalous" paradox and grotesque but also of a symbol deeply rooted in the collective unconscious. The unusual nature of this uninvited guest, this servant through whose lips God himself speaks, is manifested in small, seemingly insignificant gestures and words that are carried out (as he is given to say) to "praise God!" It is he, Semon Dye, the personification of both good and evil, the envoy of God and the Devil who silently throws the dice in a fluid, dance-like movement when the stakes are maximally high for Clay, concerning the loyalty and recovery of Dene, the fourth and, it appears, most beloved wife of that unhappy, hopeless and disillusioned farmer. It is he, too, this unexpected visitor, wrecking the lethargic peace and quiet of the provincial one-horse town, who befriends Tom, Clay's soft-spoken, introverted neighbour, desiring to turn him (in a most perfidious way) into someone much more important than just a witness or vigilant observer of scenes choreographed by Dye. Tom, due to his nature (a fondness for stubborn silence, simplicity, cowardice and a certain kind of conformism), sanctions all of Semon's offenses by the very fact of his presence at the most important moments in the text, rendering their immediate acceptance possible.

There is no theatre without spectators or "public opinion," and Semon Dye appears to be fully conscious of that fact, as he flawlessly manipulates the fates of his potential and actual victims. Haughty, bossy and insolent, greedy and brusque, he seems to conceal within him some sort of "mystery," something that ties his person to the world's ageless order, that makes him an artist and a prestidigitator, a rogue and vagrant, a rascal and personal servant to a rather distant and obscure, typically silent God, indifferent to people's struggles and situations. After the departure of this preacher, the first summer downpour washes away the fresh marks of his tires on the sandy road leading somewhere far away. Perhaps it is a sign of purification. Yet the text provides no proof of that, and such an interpretation may be a bit of a stretch.

Clay once again takes up his old, beloved place on the porch, now in the company of his third wife, the prostitute Lorene, for the possibility of meeting with whom Dye has previously made him pay dearly... "They both sat silent for a while, each looking down the road towards McGuffin. Clay felt weak over the loss of his car, but he would not have felt so badly if Semon had not gone away as he had. He had hoped to have the satisfaction of seeing Semon drive out of the yard and out of sight down the road. He felt cheated now."[35] But these are not the final, parting words with which Caldwell chooses to close the novel, which does not end at

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[34]Ibid.
[35]E. Caldwell, *Journeyman,* op. cit.

the moment of the preacher's departure, as would a well-written reportage or a collection of short, sharply expressive, intensely meaningful paradocumentary texts that follow the conventions of New Journalism (whose literary trademark came to be the crossing of genre boundaries or, as twentieth-century adherents put it, "a mixture of inventions, fiction, and document") cannot end with some kind of concrete conclusion.[36]

As Erskine Caldwell would have it, postulating that the writer follows a certain road determined by the fates, whether really existing or merely capable of existing, of characters who are always true to life: "a conclusion is just around the corner."[37] How can the author so sure, however, that this road does not (like most roads in the South, leading through sun-scorched waste lands) in fact lead from nowhere to nowhere? The answer to this question, fundamental to an analysis of Caldwell's prose style and to grasping the individual traits of his writing, is provided by a close look at the text and an attempt to describe it using the tools of micropoetics.

Why Micropoetics?

When performing a fairly superficial analysis (a more penetrating one could easily provide the basis for a longer scholarly work) of a few selected scenes from Erskine Caldwell's story, it is important to answer the fundamental question: Why micropoetics? After all, it would be possible to study *Journeyman* using tools typical of structural analysis, concentrating on such elements as the position of the narrator, the trajectory of the linear plot, or the psychological construction of the characters. We could also venture to describe and explain the text in terms of hermeneutics. In both of the cases mentioned, however, in either of those interpretative approaches, the reading would take place at a clear loss for the work studied, which (when subjected to traditional vivisection) would be submitted to oversimplifications, all the more so since conventional methods of analysis demand the advancement of a thesis, which would place further limits on the field of interpretation.

Positing a thesis and gathering arguments in favour of it would essentially close off the path to a believable interpretation of the micro-novel *Journeyman*, the more so since, as becomes clear from the statement cited earlier (in the epigraph) by the author, the characters appear to drive him, to force him to follow their lead, on the condition, however, that their literary construction be based on a paradocumentary concept of truth, on honesty and straightforwardness in the means of presenting their fates. Moreover, in following a character, and in possessing journalistic dash, the verve of the reportage-maker, the storyteller focuses his attention on details, shows characters from a close perspective, quotes their conversations and thoughts, and renounces (or keeps to a minimum) his own commentary. Thus, in giving up his right to evaluation and interpretation, the author simultaneously accords that the right to readers, whose presence (like that presence of the listeners to stories being told out loud) is a completely obvious and natural fact. That fact corresponds to Caldwell's personal experience: "Well, I was not a writer to begin with; I was a listener. In those early decades of the century, reading and writing were not common experiences. Oral storytelling was the basis of fiction."[38]

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[36] J. Durczak, quoted in: J. Jeziorska-Haładyj, *Tekstowe wykładniki fikcji*, op. cit., p. 88

[37] E. P. Broadwell, W. R. Hoag, *Erskine Caldwell, The Art of Fiction*, op. cit.

[38] E. P. Broadwell, R. W. Hoag, *Erskine Caldwell, The Art of Fiction*, op. cit. (accessed:
 1 February 2017)

In examining Caldwell's prose, whether we look at *Tobacco Road*, *God's Little Acre*, *Tragic Ground*, or *A House in the Uplands*, a literary scholar cannot escape the conviction that all of these texts are connected by a specific formation of space in lieu of action (the southern states of the USA), a way of proceeding that evokes the reportage narrative, and above all, methods that involve getting to know the characters' world, step-by-step, by accompanying them in their daily, seemingly dull, monotonous and ordinary lives. These features only reveal themselves most fully when we bring to bear on our analysis the tools of micropoetics, with the stipulation, however, that the direct experience of the text, the fact of being somehow inside the represented world, relates above all to Caldwell's skilful application of the knowledge and practice of reporting and journalism.

Caldwell's links to the concept of New Journalism seem obvious. The influence that writing for a daily newspaper could exert on the stylistic craft of this author of micronovels is elucidated by the famous remark of Thomas Connery in which he offered his own definition of reportage and paradocumentary prose. In his lapidary essay "A Third Way to Tell the Story: American Literary Journalism at the Turn of the Century," analyzing the phenomenon of the enormous popularity of the criminal sketches Lincoln Steffens (father of the genre of "descriptive narrative") published in a daily newspaper, Connery wrote: "It was not the 'news,' demanded by most newspapers, nor was it the more elaborate fictional short story required by magazines. It was as though readers have been given a window on New York […] Steffens enabled his readers to 'see' and not just 'hear' about the city." [39]

The key formulation here is the question of *seeing* – not only knowing from hearsay; this could be further elaborated on by clarifying that the point is not just seeing, but seeing through the "window," experiencing important things, with the concept of importance defined in the context of a particular time and particular social relations. In the case of Caldwell's prose, what is "important" plays out in small, provincial communities, because that is where stories are told, and that is where people listen to them attentively, experiencing (as we experience in looking through a window) the life of other people, often strangers. The task of the writer or storyteller is to open just such a window.

[39]T. B. Connery, "The Third Way to Tell the Story," in *Literary Journalism in the Twentieth Century,* ed. N. Sims, Evanston 2008, p. 13

KEYWORDS

Erskine Caldwell

micropoetics

Abstract:

The aim of this essay is to show a way of using the tools of micro-poetics to analyse a specific text, Erskine Caldwell's novel *Journey-man*, which represents a specific genre of literary utterance, and also the influence of the New Journalism on Caldwell's technique. Important here is the small size of the work analyzed, the belief in the role of chance, everyday occurrence, colloquial style, the lack of literary references or borrowings, and the specific method of presenting the characters. A characteristic feature of Erskine Caldwell's prose is also the dramatization of certain scenes and an effort to "theatricalize" the characters.

s t o r y t e l l i n g

SOUTHERN PROSE

n e w   j o u r n a l i s m

Note on the Author:

Małgorzata Dorna (1954) is an alumnus of the Faculty of Polish Philology at the University of Gdańsk and presently a second-year doctoral student at the same university (the topic of her doctoral thesis, to be written under the guidance of Prof. Jan Ciechowicz, is "The Theatricalization of Polish Public Life in the Late 20th and Early 21st Century. Between Play, Spectacle, Ceremony and Rally"). She is a passionate practitioner of art criticism, theatre studies and teaching. Her work has been published numerous times in the cultural magazine *Wybrzeża* (The Shore; pieces entitled "Migotania" [Flickers], "Autograf" [Autograph], "Jednak Książki" [Books, Still]) and on the website of the Polish branch of the International Association of Theatre Critics; she is a regular collaborator with at the BWA Gallery in Piła. Interests: easel painting, literary theory, opportunities to use the techniques of literary studies in the practice of art criticism, literature of the American South.

Aptness

– (incisiveness). In what follows, this category is applied to a small fragment of a literary text: an expression or a single sentence. Though "aptness" (of expression) indicates a perhaps rather elusive, but relatively uncomplicated property of linguistic organization of a small fragment of a literary text, this essay deals with a broader problem, less specific, for which this term has been chosen "for lack of a better one" – its meaning comes closest to the range of poetological phenomena to be discussed here, although its dictionary definition does not encapsulate all aspects of the problem in an obvious way.

The point of departure here is in fact a theoretical intuition, difficult to define straightforwardly, relating to an aesthetic experience probably familiar to every reader, involving a kind of rapture at a small fragment in a literary work (often a single sentence). The object of this feeling can consist of a number of aspects of the work. Because this kind of stimulation can be defined as an emotional form of the most favorable possible evaluation of a literary work, in order to define the possible objects of this fascination (and thus: to define "how" the relevant expression is apt), it may help to refer to the typology of ways of grasping the essence of a literary work developed by Michał Głowiński in the book *Ekspresja i empatia* (Expression and Empathy).[1] However, given that the passage in question concerns Głowiński's theory of literary criticism, applying his proposed concepts to a discussion of the problem of aptness and related fascination demands some manoeuvres of adaptation.

The first of the methods for the critical grasp of a literary work is defined as a formal modelling approach and involves verifying the suitability of individual features of the work to principles, recognized by the critic as normative, of literary construction. In the context of aptness, fascination with a given expression due to its formal modelling properties would mean that it inscribes itself into a particular reader's structural, aesthetic or compositional expectations. At the same time, that does not necessarily mean that there exist any objective rules of correct generation of literary utterances or that an utterance that so moves a reader will unfailingly fulfill such rules. The concept of "expectations" should be understood to mean simply the model of the text that is closest to the subjective preferences of the text's receiver.

In order to demonstrate aptness understood in this fashion, there is no need to invoke any extratextual criteria. The reader can either evaluate the construction of the passage itself, its prosody, the optimal (in his opinion) ordering of the words that compose it or properly chosen stylistic means, or he can judge the passage to be apt in relation to the structure of the entire literary work to which it belongs. In the second case, the work is found to generate via

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[1] See M. Głowiński, *Ekspresja i empatia. Studia o młodpolskiej krytyce literackiej* (Expression and Empathy. Studies in the Literary Criticism of Young Poland), Kraków 1997, pp. 196–204.

its own structure a certain universe, autonomous with regard to the external world, governed by laws that are binding only within itself. In this formulation, an apt expression is one that manages in an unusual way to synthetically capture the essence of that universe; it may in some sense call that universe into being (in which case it constitutes the aesthetic organization of the text) or crucially modify it (if by means of its appearance, it significantly changes the functions of other elements in the work; we must note that it does this in such a way that it endows those elements with new, valuable artistic qualities).

The second approach, the mimetic one, on the other hand, places the accent primarily on the relationship of the text to the external world. A critic who undertakes his reading with this scholarly orientation judges the way that particular elements of reality are depicted within the represented world of the literary work. He can then evaluate those depictions, either in the spirit of realism, in terms of the plastic fidelity of textual objects to extratextual originals, or according to another concept of mimesis, for example in terms of the text's capacity to capture the essence (idea) of a given object or (natural, social, political, or other) phenomenon. The range of interests of the critic studying the work from such a perspective can also include an analysis of the layer comprised of the events occurring in the work and their assessment according to the criterion of verisimilitude, of adherence to certain rules of probability.

A reader oriented toward the mimetic reception of literature can find a given expression to be apt when the text presents a way of seeing and knowing the world that resonates closely with him. An apt expression then performs such a selection of elements from reality or attributes of a particular object that in the reader's reception, it offers the closest possible approximation to reflecting the real world or the condition of the thing being described. The reader thus captivated by an apt expression feels a kind of "community of perception" with the text; he or she is satisfied that the image of reality to a great extent adheres to his own personal views concerning the real world. Here, however, we should point out that we are not talking about the kind of agreement that can easily develop when, for example, reading a journalistic text (that would mean the belief in the rightness of certain opinions contained in a literary work), but rather the affirmation of the way of cognizing reality presented in the work. The reader then either asserts that his perception of the world is governed by the same mechanisms as those that are operative in the literary work, or has allowed himself to be astonished by the possibilities presented in the text for giving an account of reality; he perceives in it the signs of a specific sensibility which he assesses as close to his own and begins to desire to learn to see the world in the same way.

The third and last way of grasping literature defined by Głowiński is the expressive approach. This approach assumes that the literary text is a form of communication sent to the reader from the author, by means of which he externalizes his views and feelings. In this formulation, there can be no recognition of the work of literature's autonomy vis-a-vis the extraliterary reality; what is more – in this perspective (and, it would appear, only in it) there can even be an attempt to undermine the status of the work as a form of fiction.

In order to fit this conceptualization to the problem of aptness, it is necessary to make a significantly more radical departure from Głowiński's concept than we have done in the two previous cases. For him, the essence of the expressive understanding involves isolating the tools

that enable criticism to enter into the emotional state of the author of the work being analyzed and thus reach the hidden depths of his work. In order to show the third possible way in which a given expression may be apt, it will suffice simply to borrow a small, very general aspect of this broad notion: the literary work is here the utterance of a subject, and hence, an aggregate of definite views on the topic of reality.

If these three motives for finding an expression to be apt were to be transformed into some kind of classification of the types of aptness, the one derived from an expressive model of literature would have to be termed philosophical. In this conceptualization, aptness signifies the approach of a given expression to some kind of general Truth, understood metaphysically and essentialistically.

The search for an apt expression in this case means a search for apt opinions or observations. They may relate to the problems of human nature, interpersonal relations, or moral, psychological, historical, and historiosophical issues, for instance. If the reader is overcome by delight at a formulation which is apt in this sense, it means that he has drawn some sort of lesson from it; together with the appearance of that formulation, the work revealed to him a truth, previously unknown to him, about the world.

There have thus emerged three ways of defining the criteria according to which a given expression can be considered apt. It should be added that in a particular case, an expression may merge two of these forms or even all three of them, or it may fulfil them only partially, modify or simplify them, or complicate them still further. This schematization is meant to be a useful instrument; the main point is not to create a thorough classification of the different types of aptness. This introductory section had the purpose of concentrating the fleeting associations that might be elicited by the phrase "aptness of expression," so that we can now proceed unhindered to the fundamental problem of this essay, i.e., the question: is aptness conditioned by features of the text, or of its reception as well?

The problem of aptness, though called by many names, has belonged to the range of interests of every attempt to reflect on the subject of ordered utterances, including literary ones. Aristotle, in the third book of his Rhetoric, writes of "excellence" in language, observing that in order for an utterance to be capable of achieving the effect of persuasion, it must not only deliver content of relevance to the listener, but also be marked by certain stylistic values. To obtain the desired effect, the rhetor can use a variety of means, among which the philosopher places particular emphasis on metaphor, contrast and compositional procedures aiming at endowing the style with the stamp of "vividness."[2] In his *Poetics*, however, he instructs that to achieve high artistic value the poet must search for expressions that are rare and refined, attempting at the same time to astonish the reader (viewer, listener, audience) with the means by which the literary utterance is organized. The chapter on features of poetic style is particularly interesting from this perspective; in it, Aristotle shows how Euripides's substitution of just one word for another in a line taken from Aeschylus significantly modifies the line's aesthetic properties.[3]

[2] See Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, trans. W. Rhys Roberts, e-book, New York 2016..
[3] See Aristotle, *Poetics*, trans S. H. Butcher, section 145b, London 1902.

It appears that the poetics of the concept took form in the sixteenth century based on similar premises, which are naturally linked with the category of aptness. According to the *Słownik literatury staropolskiej* (Dictionary of Old Polish Literature), a prominent place in the conceptual system of conceptism is accorded to the rhetorical terms *acutum* and *argutum*, which represent "the disposition toward what are called sharp and well-aimed or witty thoughts (*acumina*) and the effects achieved through those by the work itself both in its range of thematic formulations and its dialectical devices and stylistic ornamentation."[4] The purpose of the concept was to surprise the reader through a deliberate complication of the linguistic level of the text, thereby forcing him to exert an intellectual effort, by which means the work attracted the reader's close attention. The ways of attaining this effect were quite clearly and precisely defined; in the words of the *Słownik*, "the highest rank in the theory and practice in this area was earned by [...] metaphors based on the juxtaposition of distant concepts, and figures or tropes that elicit shock or surprise."[5] There follow concrete examples of the most frequently used stylistic means, such as antithesis, oxymorons, ellipsis, and inversions.

The model form of execution of the idea of the concept was a figure based on oppositions, as shown with particular clarity in Maciej Kazimierz Sarbiewski's well-known concept of "discordant harmony" (*concors discordia*). The premise of the linguistic conjunction of distant things emerged from the philosophical consciousness of the age: language was supposed to reflect the ungraspable network of connections among all the elements of the earthly world and the cosmos.[6] Sarbiewski's classification of concepts capable of constituting elements in a literary concept is worthy of particular attention; it is surprisingly congruent with the typology presented by Głowiński of ways of formulating the essence of a literary work, and thus also with the list of models of aptness previously in this essay. Sarbiewski points to: "1) rhetorical concepts: a beautiful maxim, a rare metaphor, allegory, hyperbole or similarity, 2) dialectical concepts: comparison of things in terms of greatness or the suitability of theme to object, a too deceitful sophism, 3) psychological concepts: surprises or 'shocking obviousness.'"[7]

Setting literature the task of eliciting such reactions as shock, astonishment or surprise directs us toward the most important theses of Russian formalism, in particular to the theoretical concept constitutive for that school, the literary device. At the centre of the Formalists' preoccupations lay the problem of the autonomy of the literary work, and thus they were interested in the ways that a work establishes differences between fiction and reality. Various operations that aim to render the text strange serve the purpose of establishing such differences. Their repertoire includes all of the methods shown by Aristotle and the theorists of conceptism, but is not limited to those. Anything that serves to construct an ingenious linguistic game can be called a literary device; anything that defines the distinguishing features of literariness, and thus everything that makes form, language, and the method of a work's construction the main "hero" of the text. The Formalists thus placed a particular accent on the appropriate choice of linguistic means and linguistic virtuosity,

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[4] *Słownik literatury staropolskiej: (średniowiecze – renesans – barok)*[Medieval-Renaissance-Baroque], ed. T. Michałowska, B. Otwinowska, E. Sarnowska-Temeriusz, Wrocław-Warszawa-Kraków 1990, p. 390.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Ibid., p. 392.

programmatically ignoring the aspects of works' content, the properties of particular elements of the represented world, the structure of the characters' psychology, and so on. Boris Eikhenbaum, in his famous analysis of Gogol's "Шинель" (The Overcoat), writes frankly that the awful narrative of the government clerk presented in the short story has no intrinsic interest. Only the tension that arises between the comic linguistic devices and Akaky Akakievich's tragic fate generates the desired grotesque effect. Eikhenbaum limits his work to an analysis of the linguistic layer of the text; according to the premises of the school he represents, that is completely adequate for grasping the essence of the work.[8]

The theories presented above thus offer a few tools that enable efforts to determine what the properties of an expression or phrase are that we consider apt. They may turn out to be particularly helpful in an analysis of some truly well-known sentences, widely considered to embody mastery and which for that reason have gone down in literary history. When the number of readers who are agreed that a given expression is apt becomes truly enormous, aptness takes on the marks of objectivity. If someone were trying to scientifically prove that objectivity, that person would have to resort to methods similar to those presented above.

Very often, however, a sentence intended to enchant is not found enchanting at all, or, on the contrary, a sentence which appears to be undistinguished in every way elicits very strong emotions in a reader, with the effect that it remains in his memory a long time, and the work in which it is contained begins to be perceived by him as constituting an increasingly large percent of the overall wealth of his reading. There is a whole group of entirely subjective and irrational reactions linked with the category of aptness, which for that reason, cannot be subjected to such precise description as the aspects of the problem mentioned above, and yet together comprise one of the most important, and certainly one of the most intimate reading experiences.

The first path that can help lead us toward a method of describing these experiences (describing, since the word "testing" would suggest a precision which, it appears, is not possible here) is prepared for us by Roman Ingarden. Invoking his conception here may seem surprising, since, as is well known, that Polish phenomenologist still insisted firmly on the essentialist understanding of literature and frequently opposed its analysis through the prism of readers' subjective experiences. In his "O dziele literackim" (On the Literary Work) Ingarden writes quite straightforwardly that the idea of discussing literature from the perspective of a reader's psychological experiences strikes him as absurd:

> In truth nobody turns, while reading, or as a theatre spectator, to their own conscious experiences, nor do they reflect on their own psychological states. If we suggested to anybody that they do so, they would no doubt have a laugh at our expense. Only a theorizing literary scholar could come up with such a bizarre idea as looking for a work of literature in the 'soul' of the reader.[9]

[8] B. Eichenbaum, "How 'The Overcoat' Is Made," trans. Robert A. Maguire, in *Gogol from the Twentieth Century: Eleven Essays*, ed. and trans. Maguire, Princeton 1974, pp. 267–292.

[9] R. Ingarden, *O dziele literackim. Badania z pogranicza ontologii, teorii języka i filozofii literatury*, trans. M. Turowicz, Warszawa 1960, p. 415.

The aesthetic properties of the literary work are, according to Ingarden, deeply rooted in the work itself, and cannot be separated from it. They are objective and determine the importance of the work, and the capacity to perceive them is what determines the reader's competencies (though understood not so much in terms of intellectual ability as in categories of a certain kind of sensitivity), but not the worth of the work itself.[10]

The ideal way to full knowledge of a literary work is an encounter with an aesthetic experience, understood, however, not as simply being moved by reading the work but as an unusually complex and long process (in his *O poznawaniu dzieła literackiego* [On Knowing the Literary Work] Ingarden lists the seven stages of its formation), at the end of which all of the work's properties and qualities reveal themselves to the reader in a kind of illumination.[11] The philosopher, however, also perceives in this process that quality that is the object of this study, but treats it as merely a necessary point of departure toward more important phenomena.

The aesthetic experience, according to Ingarden, begins with the reader's turning his attention toward some particular element of the literary work that elicits very strong emotions in him. These emotions are so strong that they become a kind of object of desire for the reader, as a result of which he begins to desire the closest possible contact with the work, in order to have his fill of it. In this way, that introductory emotion, as Ingarden calls it, opens up the possibility of progressing to further stages of the aesthetic experience and that, according to him, should be its one function.[12]

The philosopher is aware of the fact that this first stage is often linked with an experience of tremendous pleasure, and that is why he warns against identifying it as the entirety of the aesthetic experience, that complicated "harmony of aesthetically lofty qualities."[13] Focusing on the intimate, subjective feelings that accompany the reader while reading is considered useless, and even harmful to the work itself. Often such emotions are only superficially linked with the reception of the work; they are influenced by the presence of factors external to it, such as the reader's individual experiences, views, or the mood he is in at a given moment. These reservations are in large measure correct, since it is true that if we assume that a work is marked by certain objective properties, that it contains some essential truth about itself, an analysis of the fortuitous feelings that may accompany a chance reader during his engagement with the work cannot bring us any closer to discovering that truth. Still, the process described by Ingarden represents a model and, one might say, a laboratory one; to undergo the full aesthetic experience is, for various reasons, not always possible, and what is more, the philosopher himself notes that in the first place, not every work has the potential to elicit that experience in readers, and in the second place, that not every reader is capable of having that experience. The experience of being enchanted by a short passage in a literary work, on the other hand, is a fairly universal one, and though it cannot be formulated in a cohesive methodological framework, we cannot rule out its exertion of a significant influence on the formation of intersubjective imaginings about

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[10]Ibid., pp. 454–455.

[11]See R. Ingarden, *O poznawaniu dzieła literackiego*, trans. D. Gierulanka, Warszawa 1976, pp. 171–209.

[12]Ibid., pp. 184–185.

[13]Ibid., p. 205.

literature as such. For that reason, the phenomenon of aptness of expression or the imputation of aptness of expression by the reader seems at least worth attempting to describe, even if a "theorizing scholar of literature" thereby subjects himself to the risk of ridicule.

A critical period that advanced several helpful guidelines for attempting to grasp the formula of aptness was, we can now see, the 1970s. Three works appeared in that decade, quite independently of each other, which lend themselves to use in describing the individual and subjective experiences felt by readers in their encounter with the text.

In 1973 Roland Barthes published his most famous, book-length essay, *The Pleasure of the Text*, a kind of intimate journal of his experiences as a reader, enriched by theoretical problematizations of them. This essay can represent a model of the description of all of the emotions and properties of the reading process that Ingarden defined as undeserving of attention.

Two years later, an essay appeard by Głowiński, entitled "Świadectwa i style odbioru" (Testimonies and Styles of Reception), in which the scholar, while still using the tools of Structuralism, transgresses what were traditionally designated the boundaries of the problem by that theoretical school, by dealing no longer purely with the structure of the literary text, but also with possible ways of reading it.

Finally, the latest installment in the trilogy occured in 1980, when the first edition (the result of many years of social research) of Michel de Certeau's book *The Practice of Everyday Life* appeared; in it, de Certeau proves that theoretical and political models of the organization of the world cohere with the everyday life of "ordinary people" to a much lesser degree than might appear to be the case. Various systems of power (such as capital, politics, science, religion, as well as art and culture) try to take over particular areas of human activity, seeking to place the individual in the role of a consumer of an order imposed from above. It turns out, however, that the individual does not subordinate himself to such a power structure at all and, as a consumer, does not remain passive. In his everyday activities, he leaves his stamp on each of the discourses that limit him and creatively refashions the behavioural schemata that are imposed on him.

To understand the way the text is received by a reader, who may be susceptible to being persuaded of the aptness of some expression (understood as an irrational and subjective feeling), we should refer to the style that Głowiński defined as mythical. It is a style that, according to him, was the earliest to take form and the dominant one in archaic societies, and was reserved then for sacral writings. It soon, however, expanded its domain and began to designate "the reception of all those messages that are treated as the actualization of existing and approved world views, messages that not only confirm it but in their own way also reinforce it."[14]

When a reader is confronted with an apt expression, it appears to him as a kind of revelation. The text then ceases to be an external, fictional creation or a communication sent to him by

[14]M. Głowiński, "Świadectwa i style odbioru," *Teksty: teoria literatury, krytyka, interpretacja* (Texts: Literary Theory, Criticism, Interpretation) 1975, no. 3, p. 21.

some author, becoming instead something deeply intimate; an aesthetic reflection of his most secret, almost unconscious feelings. For de Certeau, reading is a form of escape from the world or a way of limiting it to only that intimate relationship that the reader forms with the text:

> An initial, indeed initiatory, experience: to read is to be elsewhere, where *they* are not, in another world; it is to constitute a secret scene, a place one can enter and leave when one wishes; to create dark corners into which no one can see within an existence subjected to technocratic transparency and that implacable light that, in Genet's work, materializes the hell of social alienation.[15]

In this interpretation, a given expression is apt because the reader wants it to be. "[R]eaders are travellers; they move across lands belonging to someone else, like nomads poaching their way across fields they did not write,"[16] de Certeau further writes. The objective properties of the text, if they exist at all, cease in this situation to have meaning. Contrary to what Ingarden writes, what matters is what the reader does with the work for his own use. And he can do whatever he wishes with it, because in this intimate relationship there is no place for anyone who could stop him from doing anything.

Scholarly analyses of all kinds of linguistic creations are, according to de Certeau, limited to reflections on what is repeatable and susceptible to being formulated in easily classifiable schemata. We lack tools, however, that would allow us to study how these works function in concrete situations in which they are used in singular, one-time ways by users of the language. This is glaringly evident in the case of proverbs. Scholarship can very precisely define what proverbs are and what the rules of their generation are; it has very little to say, however, about in what circumstances and in what manner they are used.[17]

At the same time, aptness in the selection of a proverb is narrowly dependent on who is citing it and when. A similar mechanism is operative when the reader finds an expression within a literary text to be apt: it becomes apt because it is used in a manner appropriate to a given situation; the reader has "stolen" it from the text by reading it in a way that the text could not have anticipated and, in the process of reading, adapted it to his own needs:

> Like tools, proverbs (and other discourses) are *marked by uses*; they offer to analysis the *imprints of acts* or of processes of enunciation; they signify the *operations* whose object they have been, operations which are relative to situations and which can be thought of as the conjunctural *modalizations* of statements or of practices; more generally, they thus indicate a social *historicity* in which systems of representations or processes of fabrication no longer appear only as normative frameworks but also as *tools manipulated by users*.[18]

Barthes likewise observes that each person has his own way of understanding the world, but that understanding can only be expressed using fragments of language which cannot be put

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[15]M. de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall, Berkeley 1984, p. 173 (emphasis in original).
[16]Ibid., p. 174.
[17]Ibid., pp. 19–21.
[18]Ibid., p. 21 (emphasis in original).

together in a clear sentence.[19] Perhaps the encounter with an apt expression is such an intense experience because the expression manages to approach the imaginative grasp, carried around by the reader but never given conscious expression by him, of the world's essence.

Thus if Ingarden spoke of the aesthetic experience, this type of encounter with an apt expression should be termed aesthetic shock. That would mean an experience that has less lofty significance for the knowledge of a literary work, but one marked by great intensity and which therefore allows the work to exert a powerful effect on the reader.

The question raised in this essay of whether aptness is a property of the text or of its reading has now been neutralized. We can clearly see that in various cases it may be a property of both. There is a rich catalogue of normative poetological criteria that justify the reclamation of certain approaches to the organization of literary texts and rejection of others, and perhaps an even richer array of experiences that the reader experiences in an intimate encounter with the text. In the first case, the aptness of expression can be submitted to analysis using all of the tools developed by literary theory. In the second, however, it can only be submitted to description – one can present a testimonial to it, as Barthes did, but not a justification for it.

[19]See R. Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*, trans. Richard Howard, New York 1975, pp. 49–51.

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Gerard Ronge

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incisiveness

KEYWORDS

f a s c i n a t i o n

C O N C E P T I S M

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aptness   **concept**

U S E

ABSTRACT:

This entry attempts to explain what the mechanisms that govern the experience, familiar to every reader of literary works, of a particular aesthetic frisson elicited by a small passage in a work or even a single sentence. After presenting a handful of very general ways of understanding the category of aptness, the author moves to consider the subject of the possible shades of meaning it can take on depending on whether we treat it as an immanent trait of a given literary utterance or as a quality that takes form only during the process of the work's reception.

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Rozbiory and Interpretation. Polish Micropoetics of Late Classicism

Helena Markowska

In the introduction to his *Lectures in Comparative Literature*, Ludwik Osiński announces:

> The course of these sessions, starting right from the next one, will begin with the epic, after which we will next take as our focus an extremely vast literary craft, the drama. [...]. We will try, in any case, to add something to the disassembling of the greatest works of various nations and centuries with our history of art.[1]

I would like here to turn our attention to an unassuming, seemingly transparent, though now archaic, word used by the poet-professor, "disassembling" (*rozbiór*). "Rozbiór" (meaning both "disassembling, parsing, analysis" and "partition" in the historico-geographical sense), still frequently used in that sense in the first half of the twentieth century, is in fact the Polish equivalent of the Greek word "analysis," noted as a synonym in dictionaries, both old and new, of the Polish language. According to Linde's dictionary, "rozbiór" means "taking apart, disassembling [...] (analysis)"[2]; in the famous "Wilno" (Vilnius) dictionary we find: "breakdown, de-

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[1] L. Osiński, *Wykład literatury porównawczej*, in *Dzieła* (Collected Works), vol. 2., Warszawa 1861, p. 7.
[2] S.B. Linde, *Słownik języka polskiego* (Dictionary of Polish Language), vol. 6., Warszawa 1951, entry: "rozbiór."

bate, analysis"[3]; in the "Warsaw" dictionary – "dissection, taking apart; [...] analysis"[4] – and in the dictionary of lexicographer Witold Doroszewski: "detailed study, consideration; analysis."[5] The sources that define "rozbiór" offer, nonetheless, widely varied definitions. Linde writes that the "analytical method, the *methodus analytica*, proceeds from particular to universal things,"[6] while the Wilno dictionary claims that what such analysis involves is "weighing each detail separately"[7] and the Warsaw one defines it as "an investigation of the component parts of a certain whole."[8] On the other hand, there can be no doubt that all of the explanations of "rozbiór" cited designate a method, or at least procedure, of research. That is also how Osiński understands it in the text quoted above, wherein he also asserts:

> It is a property of the attribute of perfect beauty that it fascinates, arrests, captivates, and transports not only experts but the mass of people who are capable of seeing it. However, a cry of adoration is not sufficient; we must acquaint ourselves closely with these masters of art [i.e., criticism, literary studies – H.M.], which **through close study, through disassembling and comparison**, have tried to discover the unfailing rules and show what is the participation of a good writer and good connoisseur together.[9]

So what meanings, in relation to the study of literature, were ascribed to the word "rozbiór" at the beginning of the nineteenth century? An attempt to answer this question shall enable us to trace some strikingly varied approaches to work with the literary text in the late Enlightenment.

Osiński himself would carry out his promise of "disassembling [...] the greatest works," providing in his *Lectures* a course, organized according to genre, on the *great books*. He devotes individual lectures to successive texts, not to particular artists or periods. As in the above quotation, the analysis in the lectures is closely linked with comparison. Within each genre there exist certain model works, from which the traits of an ideal work can be extrapolated, in order to next follow their execution in other texts. It is noteworthy that the comparative aspect is particularly predomiant in the description of works found by the professor to be inferior – they are constantly juxtaposed with exemplary texts – whereas those latter texts are discussed rather in terms of what is immanent to them (for example, the discussion of *Pharsalia* consists of cataloguing the differences between Lucan and Homer, and that of Camões *The Lusiads* of comparisons to ancient texts and Tasso). However, even when there is no talk of hierarchical relations, comparison remains the main tool of analysis: "Closer analysis will show, in a comparison of the two authors, that where Homer is great in invention, in arrangement, Virgil is great in perfection and taste [...]."[10] Osiński's comparative method, which no doubt

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[3] *Słownik języka polskiego*, ed. A. Zdanowicz and others.., vol. 2., Wilno 1861, entry: "rozbiór."

[4] *Słownik języka polskiego*, ed. J. Karłowicz, A. A. Kryński, W. Niedźwiedzki, vol. ??, Warszawa 1912, entry: "rozbiór."

[5] *Słownik języka polskiego*, ed. W. Doroszewski, vol. 7., Warszawa 1965, entry: "rozbiór."

[6] S.B. Linde, op. cit., entry: "rozbiorowy."

[7] *Słownik języka polskiego*, ed. A. Zdanowicz... op. cit., entry: "rozbiór."

[8] *Słownik języka polskiego*, ed. J. Karłowicz... op. cit., entry: "rozbiór."

[9] L. Osiński, op. cit., p. 1. Emphasis mine – H.M.

[10] L .Osiński, op. cit., p. 87.

deserves closer attention,[11] nonetheless interests me here less than what he has to say on the subject of the analytical, dissecting (*rozbiórowa*) activity of literary studies when he writes:

> For it is not easy to reach, in great works, that mystery of arrangement, these if I may, forms of scaffolding and springs, on which the construction stands. Doing so cannot result from a passing reading; only concerted effort at study will lead us to knowledge of art, and the time of exertion will be rewarded by untold bliss.[12]

Thus even if the critic's goal is to reach the "component parts" of the whole, what matters here is a work's composition, above all that of its plot, rather than a study proceeding word-by--word, an approach the theoreticians of classicism have sometimes been accused of.[13] Osiński's analysis, at least in its declared intent, thus resembles a demolition that allows the structure of a building to become known.

Osiński also calls the work of literary scholars an "exact" and "concerted" form of study, opposing it to a "shout of adoration" or a "passing reading" (a typical attitude, we may surmise, among the Romantics, with whom the professor polemicizes). The work of the literary scholar here approaches, if not science, then at least professionalization. The word "exact" used by Osiński, is not used here in the sense we now associate with the exact sciences, but rather means "precise," "meticulous." Still, the opposition in question directs our attention to yet another aspect of the meaning of the word "rozbiór" – it is also a mathematical concept (referring to mathematical or trigonometric analysis, as Linde notes), as well as a chemical one (meaning decomposition, superseded later by "rozkład") and an anatomical one (according to the Wilno dictionary: "division of an organic body into parts to learn the internal structure, changes taking place in the organism, etc. dissection"[14]). Thus we find that the "rozbiór" of a literary work in the Polish of that day bears traces of resemblance to investigative procedures used in those sciences.

The use of dissection or analysis as a method of study appears in another text from the same period – "Rozbiory pisarzów" (Analyses of Writers) by Euzebiusz Słowacki[15] – of which Eugeniusz Czaplejewicz has noted: "Analysis [Rozbiór] is thus a point of departure for scholarly inquiry. Scholarship takes its beginning from analysis."[16] Czaplejewicz relies, in this assertion,

[11]Of course the category of comparison was often discussed, above all during debates on the theme of comparative studies' identity as a scholarly discipline. In the historical context referred to here, and in the context of connections between comparative studies and philology, it is important to consider the works of T. Bilczewski: "'Ancilla philologiae', 'ancilla nationis'? Komparatystyka a filologia narodowa" ("Ancilla philologiae," "ancilla nationis"? Comparative Studies and National Philology), in *Przyszłość polonistyki: koncepcje – rewizje – przemiany* (The Future of Polish Studies: Concepts, Revisions, Changes), ed. A. Dziadek, K. Kłosiński, F. Mazurkiewicz, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, Katowice 2013 or "Historia literatury, komparatystyka, przekład" (Literary History, Comparative Studies, Translation), *Ruch Literacki* 2012, vols. 4–5.

[12]L. Osiński, op. cit. p. 16.

[13]Though writers' style is also a topic considered by Osińskiego and he sometimes comments on expressions which are, in his opinion, tasteless.

[14]*Słownik języka polskiego*, ed. A. Zdanowicz... op. cit.

[15]E. Słowacki, "Rozbiory pisarzów," in *Dzieła z pozostałych rękopismów ogłoszone* (Works Omitted from Previous Manuscripts), vol. 3., Wilno 1826, pp. 1 –209.

[16]E. Czaplejewicz, "Euzebiusz Słowacki jako teoretyk literatury. Uwagi i spostrzeżenia" (Euzebiusz Słowacki as Literary Theoretician. Notes and Observations), *Przegląd Humanistyczny* no. 6/1980, p. 87.

on a remark imputed to Słowacki, according to which (in Czaplejewicz's paraphrase) "scholarship deals primarily with analysis, then description, and finally, inquiry into causes."[17] With regard to "Rozbiory pisarzów," those remarks must be handled with caution. These short fragments, like the analyses offered by Osiński, are devoted to individual works. They are often very short, however, containing only an encapsulation of the content and an evaluation of a particular work. It could be said that that is precisely how Słowacki carries out the procedure of analysis, but it should be remembered that the title of this section of his Collected Works was probably not devised by the author. He himself only uses the term "rozbiór" in three cases, which we must in connection with this question examine more closely.

In the fragment entitled "Reja *Spólne narzekanie korony*" (Rej's "Common Complaint of the Crown") Euzebiusz Słowacki writes: "we, wishing to make our reader's picture of this author's talents and way of writing more exact, will enter here into a somewhat longer analysis of one of Rej's writings entitled *Spólne narzekanie wszej korony* […]."[18] The same adjective, "przydługi" (lengthy), appears with the word "rozbiór" in the chapter on Sebastian Klonowic's *Flis*: "Taking in view the sparseness of this writing, let us enter here into a lengthier analysis of it."[19] Both of the passages mentioned maintain the summarizing approach of those lectures. In comparison to his other lectures, they contain a much greater abundance of quotations from the works being discussed, and in particular, a much greater number footnote citations. The remarks contained therein relate primarily to the linguistic layer of the text – its rhetorical structure: "In the first two periods there is a palpable neglect in the uniformity of their endings"[20]; archaisms: "Rej uses the endings '-och' and '-ech for all seven cases, uses the ending 'y' with feminine adjectives in plural, for example *ty cnoty*, feminine names in the second case he sometimes ends with 'ei' or 'ey,' e.g. *wiarei*, *pracey*"[21]; and style: "This repetition of one pronoun unnecessarily […], and use of the conjunction *a* to connect thoughts makes his speech diffuse. It appears that this is an imitation of holy books."[22] Słowacki also takes care to explain words that may be incomprehensible to his contemporaries: "*Biesagi* [scrips] are a kind of *sakwas* [travelling-bags] that were hung on horses,"[23] "the word *xieniec* refers to fish innards,"[24] "*osobne* is the same as *osobliwe* [individual], beautiful."[25] In these explanations, he does not shy from evaluating individual expressions: "*Smaży się majętność* [the estate is being scorched] is an improper expression, and even in those times, poor usage […]. One should say *gore majętność* [the estate is on fire]"[26]; "This comparison with Cain and Abel is completely inappropriate. It is a defective age in which it was necessary to cite the Scriptures under fear of seeming uneducated."[27] As should be evident, however, this evaluation is marked by

[17]Ibid.
[18]E. Słowacki, op cit., p. 72.
[19]Ibid., p. 88.
[20]Ibid., p. 73.
[21]Ibid., p. 74.
[22]Ibid.,, p. 76.
[23]Ibid., p. 74.
[24]Ibid., p. 89.
[25]Ibid., p. 98.
[26]Ibid., p. 74.
[27]Ibid., p. 75.

a consciousness of cultural differences and changes in language. Similar assessments of the composition of an entire text can, however, be found in the main text: "taken as a whole, the [work] in question sins against brevity,"[28] "more such fairytale or historical deviations [...] would have made this work incomparably more pleasurable."[29] On the basis of comparing the chapters devoted to works by Rej and Klonowic with the other parts of "Rozbiory pisarzów," we can thus assert that a "rozbiór," or at any rate a "lengthier" (more extensive and exact) one was, for Słowacki, a kind of commentary on the text, relating primarily to its rhetorical structure, grammar and lexicon.

A somewhat different understanding of the term is displayed in its last instance of use in Słowacki's "Rozbiory." It appears in the fragment placed at the end of the collection entitled "Dokładna nauka języka i stylu polskiego w dwóch częściach [...] przez Tomasza Szumskiego [...] w Poznaniu 1809" (An Exact Study of Polish Language and Style in Two Parts [...] by Tomasz Szumski [...] in Poznań 1809). Słowacki writes: "The work we are undertaking to deliberate on [...] by many measures deserves attention; and its [rozbiór] will give us material for many observations which can be useful in the study of our native language."[30] The dissection that follows would nowadays undoubtedly be characterized and classified as a scholarly review. The critique of the work under discussion is expressed in such formulations as the following: "The introduction to grammar contains definitions and distinctions which do not always bear the mark of logical exactitude,"[31] "in fairness, it should be mentioned that the author makes some apt remarks [...], but when the author [...],"[32] etc.

This understanding of the word "rozbiór" – as a review – was not taken note of by Linde, the closest lexicographer to Słowacki in time; it does, however, appear in later dictionaries. In the Wilno dictionary, it is the fourth definition: "report, critical deliberation, criticism, review. *Rozbiór of a work of dramatic art*"[33]; in the Warsaw dictionary it appears as one element of the first meaning: "report, criticism, evaluation of a written work or a work of dramatic art."[34] Above all, however, an examination of print journalism in Słowacki's time shows that already at the beginning of the nineteenth century that meaning was widely in use. Here is a handful of examples from the *Dziennik Wileński* (Wilno Daily)[35]: "Architecture by Sebastian Count Sierakowski. A critical analysis of the work by Jan Śniadecki" (vol.1. 1815, p. 90), "Samolub [Egoist], a comedy by J. U. Niemcewicz. Critical analysis by Leon Borowski" (vol. 2 1815, p. 82), "Nauka matematyki [The study of mathematics] by Alexander Konkowski. First volume encompassing arithmetic. A critical analysis of the work by Michał Poliński" (vol. 3, 1815, p. 83), "Analysis of a work entitled: O filozofii by Felix Jaroński, with remarks on it by X. Anioł Dowgird" (vol. 6, 1817, p. 67), "Joachim Lelewel's bibliography in two volumes,

[28]Ibid., p. 80.

[29]Ibid., p. 100.

[30]Ibid., p. 209.

[31]Ibid., p. 210.

[32]Ibid., p. 211.

[33]*Słownik języka polskiego*, ed. A. Zdanowicz.

[34]*Słownik języka polskiego*, ed. J. Karłowicz.

[35]The *Dziennik wileński* was selected because it published some of Słowacki's texts, as well as Borowski's "rozbiory," a topic addressed below. Given that it constituted, to a great extent, an area of expression for professors at the University of Wilno, reviews of scholarly works are doubtless overrepresented therein.

a review of volume 1" (vol. 2, 1813, p. 121). Let us observe that in most cases "rozbiór" (translated in the examples as "analysis") appears together with the adjective "critical," in the context of which the word "rozbiór" seems (at least initially) to imply neutrality, while only the "critical" aspect signifies the designation, typical in a review, of the work's faults and virtues. That is not an ironclad rule, however, as the two final examples, also involving reviews, will show.[36]

Among the examples cited of "analyses," the attention of literary scholars is naturally seized by Leon Borowski's text about a work by Niemcewicz. That review begins with remarks regarding the poet's introduction to an edition of his comedy. It focuses on defining the genre he chose and the aims he set for himself as well as the aims implied by the genre – their complementarity is, after all, the measure of a work's success. Two of Borowski's footnotes are of interest here: the first is a comparative note citing other European works dealing with the topic of egoism, the second an editorial one, indicating errors in the typography of the comedies. The review itself is introduced with the sentence: "Here are some remarks on the arrangement of this comedy,"[37] defining the main object of the reviewer's attention. In fact, the review presents mainly an evaluation of the construction of the plot (or "arrangement") with reference to the principle of probability (is it convincing that several main characters happen to be returning to Warsaw on the same day?), most often as a kind of inner logic of events (does a character have an important reason to enter the room in a given scene? Does she or he have a valid reason for informing an interlocutor about the things they converse about?). There are also remarks concerning *decorum*, the suitability of a character's social status to the content and style of her utterance (can a cook voice metaphysical assertions?), the ethical obligations of art ("the spirit of seemliness of our age [...] is outraged against such treatises [...] which [...] do not incur on the malefactor any mockery, humiliation, any punishment"[38]), personalities ("each one, taken separately, is powerfully drawn and with great knowledge of the human heart"[39]). The text concludes with commentaries on particular linguistic expressions, e.g. "'that that nations never lose' – one should say: 'that which'"; "the word 'bajuta' cannot be found in Mr. Linde's dictionary either, and Lithuanians do not know what it means [...]."[40] What links Borowski's analysis-review to the texts referred to earlier is primarily the ordering of the argument – it proceeds scene-by-scene, commenting on the plot action summarized and selected quotations. These remarks are extremely comprehensive, which is why the detailed analysis deals only with the first act, and with regard to the later acts, the reviewer is content to address only his most major concerns.

Another text by Borowski, worth considering at some length, similarly limits itself to a discussion of a work's first part – the text is "Uwagi nad *Monachomachią* Krasickiego" (Notes on Krasicki's *War Between Monks*), published in the *Dziennik Wileński* under the heading "Rozbior

[36]The more common (in contemporary language at least) Polish word for a review, "recenzja," also appears in the *Dziennik*, even as the title of a work.

[37]L. Borowski, "Rozbiór *Samolub*a," in *Uwagi nad poezją i wymową i inne pisma krytycznoliterackie* (Remarks on Poetry and Speech and Other Literary Critical Writings), ed. S. Buśka-Wroński, Warszawa 1972, p. 155.

[38]Ibid., p. 162.

[39]Ibid., p. 164.

[40]Ibid., p. 165.

pisarzów polskich" (An Analysis of Polish Writers).[41] Where the analysis of *Samolub* represented an example of an analysis-review, these "Notes" take the form of an introduction and unusually extensive footnotes to the text. The introduction contains a short history of the genre of the heroic-comic epic poem with particular attention to Boileau's *Lutrin* (The Lectern; in Polish, *Pulpit*), thought to have been Krasicki's model. Next comes "Rzecz Monachomachii," a summary of the poem in its entirety. Borowski's footnotes contain material and historical explanations (e.g. concerning different monastic orders; an extensive passage is devoted to institutionalized theological disputation), but also concerning the octave as a form of versification, the trajectory of the plot ("the arrangement") and draw attention to particular stylistic devices, e.g.:

> The techniques of enlivening speech that are peculiar to Krasicki include frequent repetitions of the same words at the beginning of several lines in an octave – such as here the word "*wojna*" [war] repeated in lines 1, 2, 5, and in the next stanza the words "*w mieście*" (in the city) in stanza 5 "*szczęśliwszy*" (happy) and in many other places. Rhetoricians call this figure *repetitio*.[42]

Finally, most of these notes point to possible intertextual paths to follow. Among the authors mentioned are Ariosto, Jan Kochanowski, Boileau, Virgil, Erasmus of Rotterdam, Piotr Kochanowski, Tasso, Horace, Petronius the psalmist, and Homer[43]; the relevant passages are almost always cited. We might better say "intertextual tropes," since in fact the parallels and links include both compositional similarities ("The introductory part of each canto follows the model of Ariosto"[44]) and borrowings of particular words ("'holy idlers' – from Boileau: *ces pieux fainéans*"), as well as more distant associations (for example, the formulation "reverend Foolishness" provides an occasion to recall Erasmus's *Stultitiae Laus* (In Praise of Folly) – translated into Polish as *Pochwała głupstwa* (In Praise of Foolishness).[45] An examination of Krasicki's poem in the larger context of European literature permits not only a comparison (as was made by Osiński) of the Polish poet's accomplishment with the work chosen by him as an object of emulation (*Le Lutrin*) and evaluation of it, but also an enhanced reading lekturę, supplemented with remarks on precisely those tropes that not every reader would discover independently. Running just a bit ahead of the argument, it is worthwhile here to quote the words of Mickiewicz in his introduction to his commentary

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[41] L. Borowski, "Uwagi nad Monachomachią Krasickiego," *Dziennik Wileński* 1818, vol. 2., pp. 284 –288, 471 –486. In the edition prepared by Buśka-Wroński the headings of works are omitted, and the text placed in the chapter of Commentaries, effacing the link between the "Uwagi" and "Rozbior Samoluba," which is placed in the Reviews section. The contemporary edition also conveys no idea of the form of the text, which in the first edition appeared as footnotes to the first canto of *Monachomachia*, whereas in the selected works the notes are presented in the main body of text, between successive sections, disrupting the continuity of Krasicki's text.

[42] Ibid., p. 292.

[43] I present these in the order in which they appear in the text. To highlight the erudition of Borowski's commentary, it is important also to remember that the sources cited in the footnotes containing historical explanations are equally numerous.

[44] Ibid., p. 291.

[45] S. Buśka-Wroński here writes of Borowski's "comparative method": "the conception itself is drawn from the language of the criticism of that time, which formulated judgments evaluating a given literary work through comparison of the work with other works recognized as 'exemplary' for the same genre or style" (S. Buśka-Wroński, introduction to L. Borowski, *Uwagi*, op. cit., p. 15). This formulation, cohering nicely with Osiński's lectures, nonetheless presents a narrow view of Borowski's editorial method, which does not always compare, but sometimes points to references and tropes.

on Trembecki's *Sofiówka*, which, in my opinion, could also be applied to Borowski's work as a commentator on Krasicki:

> And as the beauties of Trembecki's poetry are the result of his great talents, extensive and profound erudition, joined with a taste shaped precisely on the models of old Polish classics and ancient classics, so, in order to feel those beauties of feeling in their full intensity, it is necessary, in addition to being in the proper frame of mind, to know the old Polish language with some exactitude, and even ancient languages […], which is why an explication and commentary on all Trembecki's writings would be very important and useful, leading to the possibility that Trembecki's taste might become increasingly widespread.[46]

Although Borowski's analysis-commentary was printed in the *Dziennik*, not together with the collected poetry like Mickiewicz's text, there can be no doubt that it constitutes a kind of commentary proper to a scholarly edition.[47] The essence of that accomplishment is presented by the twentieth-century publisher of Borowski's writings thus:

> The published „Uwagi nad '*Monachomachią*'" also constituted a certain innovative accomplishment. The innovation consisted in the fact that Borowski was the first to apply to a contemporary text methods developed in the study of classical philology.[48]

These methods were being taught at Wilno at that time by Borowksi's and Mickiewicz's teacher, Gotfryd Ernest Groddeck. Among the publications of antique works prepared by Groddeck that are still available, the one that can be treated as the model is his edition of Sophocles's *Trachiniae* (Women of Trachis),[49] which is preceded by a preface in Latin (*Fabulae Trachiniarum nomen, argumentum, personae, tempus, ornatus scenicus*), and accompanied by extensive explication in the form of end notes (*Animadversiones ad Sophoclis Trachinias*), explaining certain expressions and stylistic figures, providing factual explanations and references to other texts of antiquity. Neither the other Greek and Latin texts published by Groddeck,[50] nor the editions prepared by Borowski (Terence's *Adelphi* with a Polish summary of the play[51] and Ovid's *Metamorphoses* in Żebrowski's translation, preceded by "O Jakubie Żebrowskim i jego

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[46]A. Mickiewicz, "Objaśnienia do poematu opisowego *Zofijówka*" (Explication of the Descriptive Poem *Zofiówka*), in S. Trembecki, *Poezje* (Poetry), vol. 1., Wilno 1822, p. 382.

[47]This has previously been noted by Juliusz Kleiner: "he was the first to offer a scholarly analysis and an exemplary scholarly edition in the *Uwagi nad 'Monachomachią*'" (J. Kleiner, *Mickiewicz*, vol. 1 *Dzieje Gustawa* (History of Gustaw), Lublin 1948, p. 39, quoted in Z. Rejman, "Romantyk o klasyku. Adama Mickiewicza *Objaśnienia do poematu opisowego 'Zofijówka'*" (Romantic on Classical. Adam Mickiewicz's "Commentary on the Descriptive Poem 'Zofijówka,'" in *Świadomość literacka polskiego oświecenia* (The Literary Consciousness of the Polish Enlightenment), Warszawa 2005, p. 297.

[48]S. Buśka-Wroński, op. cit., p. 15.

[49]Sophocles, *Trachiniae. Graece*, in usum lectionum edidit et notis illustravit G.E. Groddeck, Wilno 1808.

[50]Of those mentioned in the Nowy Korbut literary bibliography, the only one I was unable to get a glimpse of was Persius's *Satires*.

[51]A.P. Terentius, *Adelphi czyli bracia. Komedia do użytku szkół przystosowana przez J. Henryka Augusta Schultze, rektora osterrodzkiego, przedrukowana z encyklopedii dla szkół klasycznych łacińskich pisarzy* (Adelphi or the Brothers. Comedy for Use in Schools, Adapted by J. Henry August Schultze, Rector of Osterrode, Reprinted from the Encyclopedia for Schools of the Classic Latin Writers), Wilno 1813.

przekładaniu" [On Jakub Żebrowski and His Translation][52]), though accompanied by prefaces and uncontestably carefully prepared, possess such an elaborate critical apparatus. The effort undertaken by Borowski on the material of *Monachomachia* is thus all the more striking.

Here we must pause for a moment to consider the choice of material in that volume. In Borowski's case, as with the later commentaries by Mickiewicz, he was dealing with writers of the Polish Enlightenment at its high point, under Stanisław August Poniatowski. Though in the case of Mickiewicz's text, scholars often speak of the cult of Tremebcki said to have been reigning in Wilno,[53] we should expand our view here and turn our attention to the fact that the beginning of the 19th century was the time when the first collected editions of our Polish "classics" were released. F. K. Dmochowski publishes Krasicki's (1803-4) and Karpiński's (1806) works, Kiciński the poetry of Trembecki (1819), and not long after that, the editions prepared by F.S. Dmochowski of F.K. Dmochowski (1826), Kniaźnin (1828-9) and Zabłocki (1829-30). This is the context in which we must consider the Wilno editions: Trembecki's 1822 *Poezje*, but also Krasicki's *Dzieła* in the edition printed by the Typographical Society (which arose in the university milieu, in circles close to Borowski[54]), published in 1819, and thus barely a year after the publication of "Uwagi nad *Monachomachią*." Curiously, though there were voices that urged the Society to publish works by authors of the "golden age"[55] or historical works,[56] it was in fact authors of recent vintage – Krasicki, Karpiński and Kniaźnin – who dominated the short list of authors it published.[57] It is thus not surprising that the first attempts to prepare a philological edition, made by Borowski and Mickiewicz, relate to those

[52]P. Owidiusz Naso, *Metamorphoseon to jest Przeobrażenia ksiąg piętnaście przekładania Jakuba Żebrowskiego* (Metamorphoses or Transfiguration in 15 Books, Translated by Jakub Żebrowski), Wilno 1821. "O Jakubie Żebrowskim i jego przekładaniu" unfortunately has not been republished in any contemporary collection of Borowski's writings.

[53]As well as Mickiewicz's own fascination with Trembecki: "Authors of studies of Mickiewicz, of whom I have in mind Piotr Chmielowski, Roman Pilat, and also Józef Tretiak, Henryk Życzyński, Juliusz Kleiner, write about how the young Mickiewicz was fascinated by Trembecki and consciously made him his master" (Z. Rejman, op. cit., pp. 294 –295). For a short summary of Mickiewicz's attitude toward Trembecki, see Dorota Siwicka, "Stanisław Trembecki," entry in *Mickiewicz. Encyklopedia*, ed. J.M. Rymkiewicz, et al, Warszawa 2001.

[54]See Z. Skwarczyński, *Poprzednicy filomatów* (Precursors of the Philomaths), *Pamiętnik Literacki*, no. 1/1956, pp. 1-25 and D. Beauvois, *Szkolnictwo polskie na ziemiach litewsko-ruskich 1803-1832* (Polish Education in Lithuanian and Ruthenian Territories 1803-1832), vol. 1., *Uniwersytet Wileński* (University of Wilno), Lublin 1991, pp. 195-196.

[55]The anonymous author of the article "Myśli obywatelskie o Towarzystwie Typograficznem Wileńskiem" (A Citizen's Thoughts on the Wilno Typographical Society) writes: "It would be easy to find hardworking publishers of our old authors of the age of King Zygmunt, with damage to the Enlightenment and with disparagement of national glory, buried in reproach and ignorance" (*Tygodnik Wileński* [Wilno Weekly], no. 136, 15 April 1819, p. 235).

[56]Joachim Lelewel wrote: "Let us hope that when truly patriotic enterprises appear, in reprinted chronicles, beginning from Bielski, that we will be able to buy them for the price of a printed New Testament in Petersburg. We must wait for a Wilno Typographical Society that will have the benefit of the nation for its purpose: and in today's state of affairs, that one society is capable of assuaging that great need" ("Pielgrzyma w Dobromilu czyli nauk wiejskich rozbior z uwagami nad stanem wiejskim w polszcze i ulepszeniem oświaty jego" [The Pilgrim in Dobromil, or an Analysis of Country Learning with Remarks on the State of the Countryside in Poland and Improvement of its Education], in *Rozbiory dzieł obejmujących albo dzieje, albo rzeczy polskie różnymi czasy przez Joachima Lelewela ogłoszone w jedną księgę zebrane*, [Analyses of Works Encompassing Either History of Polish Affairs of Various Times Made by Joachim Lelewel, Collected in One Book, Poznań 1844, p. 97). Earlier, the historian complains that "Our poetry printed in books [...] apparently does not bring enough of the fruits desired instantaneously for country folk." In this connection he mentions Kniaznin, Karpiński and Krasicki (p. 92).

[57]I was unable to find a full list of the titles published by the Society, but they probably consisted of: *Dzieła poetyckie Ignacego Krasickiego* (Poetic Works of Ignacy Krasicki, 1819), *Dzieła prozą Ignacego Krasickiego* (Prose Works of Ignacy Krasicki, 1819; together with the previous title, 10 volumes of poetry and prose in all), *Pieśni nabożne* (Godly Songs) by Franciszek Karpiński (1819), *Statut Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego* (Charter of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, 1819), *Bajki i przypowieści* by Ignacy Krasicki (Fables and Proverbs, 1820), *Poezje* by Franciszek Dionizy Kniaźnin (Poetry, 1820, 3 volumes), *Pan Jan ze Swisłoczy* by Jan Chodźka (Pan Jan from Swisłoczy, 1821).

very poets, all the more since classicist poetry based on "extensive and profound erudition" seemed to demand such a commentary. Nevertheless, we must note that the decision to provide works written only a few decades earlier with an apparatus, previously accorded only to texts from antiquity, and thereby acknowledging them as objects of scholarly study, bears the mark of undeniable innovation.

At the same time it should be noted that Mickiewicz's Commentaries follow a track previously cleared for him by Borowski, though with certain modifications. The work's preface begins with remarks on the subject of the genre of descriptive poetry, followed by a description of Trembecki's talent (this is probably where we find the most innovative tones, in the discussion of his style's influence on the "nature of our native tongue"[58]) and the structure, i.e., a summary, of the poem. The commentaries themselves, to a greater extent than is true of the "Uwagi do *Monachomachii*," relate to the language of the work. In Mickiewicz's work, as in Borowski's, we likewise find explanations of factual matters, while the "comparative" element is less prominent, limited to showing the references to Horace, Ovid, Virgil, Homer, and Lucretius – while there are no references to more contemporary descriptive poems. The choice of footnotes is thus clearly dictated by the belief, expressed in the preface, that the force of Trembecki's poetry originated in drawing from the resources of the Polish language and classical erudition, while he resisted the influences of French poetry that were common in his time.[59] We thus see that Mickiewicz's work harmoniously joins an inherited, conscientiously implemented model of utterance with the poet's own convictions.[60]

It was not Mickiewicz, however, who wrote the most extensive analysis of Tremebcki's poetry in the period under discussion. Hipolit Klimaszewski, likewise a pupil of Groddeck and Borowski, a teacher of Polish language and literature at Wilno's Secondary School No. II,[61] published his *Rozbiór poezji Stanisława Trembeckiego. Cz. I* (Analysis of Stanisław Tremebcki's Poetry, Part 1) in 1830.[62] The book includes editions of four texts by Trembecki: two long poems – "Sofijówka" and "Powązki" – and two translations – of the beginning of Book IV of

[58]A. Mickiewicz, op. cit., p 380. Mickiewicz's "Objaśnienia" can of course be found in the anniversary edition of Mickiewicz's Complete Works (Warszawa, vol. 5. 1999), but I here have made use of the original because I was also interested in the manner of their placement in the book as a whole – they were appended at the end of the collection as a separate article.

[59]Ibid.

[60]For a highly detailed analysis of Mickiewicz's commentary, see Z. Rejman, op. cit., pp. 299 –312. Rejman's article focuses on the question of the descriptive and imagistic aspects of poetry in Mickiewicz's footnotes in the context of his formulation of the relations between Romanticism and Classicism.

[61]Klimaszewski's fate, particularly in exile, is described by E. Wichrowska in the book *Hipolit Klimaszewski – nieznana karta z dziejów Wielkiej Emigracji* (Hipolit Klimaszewski – An Obscure Page from the History of the Great Emigration), Warszawa 2012. That monograph is focused on an analysis of the surviving correspondence of Klimaszewski as a document of his life, which is why "Rozbiór poezji," though it was even included in the title of one of his chapters, is dealt with in a single sentence (p. 60). Excerpts from the list of his subscribers are also included (p. 61), while there is no list of the works of Trembecki discussed in the work.

[62]The next part or parts were never released. The only surviving fragment that could be a part of the planned continuation of the work consists of an article published by Klimaszewski in his *Noworocznik Litewski* (*Noworocznik Litewski na rok 1831* [The 1831 Lithuanian Annual], published by H. Klimaszewski, Wilno 1830), entitled "O charakterze Henryka Brühla i wpływie Fryderyka Michała Xięcia Czartoryskiego Kanclerza W. W. Xtwa Lit. na sprawę inwestytury kurlandzkiej. Rzecz wyjęta z rozbioru wiersza St. Trembeckiego na śmierć Xięcia Kanclerza" (On the Nature of Henryk Brühl and the Influence of Grand Duke Fryderyk Michał Czartoryski, Chancellor of Lithuania, on the Matter of the Courland Investiture. Matter Extracted from an Analysis of Trembeckis's Poem on the Death of the Chancellor).

the *Aenead* and of Horace's letter to Augustus – and commentaries on all four of them. The entire work is preceded by an introduction, "O talencie poetyckim Stanisława Trembeckiego" (On the Talent of Stanisław Tremebecki),[63] in which the author not only discusses the work of this important poet of the late eighteenth century, but also explains the concept underlying the entire publication. Here, for the first time, we see put into words the idea of combining the analytical methods of classical philology with studies of modern poetry, which where previous critical texts were concerned we could only surmise. I will quote the relevant passage in its entirety, given its extreme importance for the history of Polish literary studies, before proceeding to analyse and dissect it in appropriate detail:

> Among the ranks of aids to expanding knowledge and perfecting taste and the profound knowledge of languages, theoreticians of the fine arts have justly placed the philological dissection [*rozbieranie*] of model writers; because in such consideration our mind finds its way, where the writer's thought went, and through him learns to think, gathering with him ways of expressing our own thoughts; drawing from the spring whence genius drew its own powers, [our mind] can discover increasingly precious treasures for its own enrichment. Undoubtedly the dissection [*rozbiór*] of the Greek and Roman authors brings the most certain benefits in this profession and one can never work on them enough in that sense; nevertheless, we should not deny such an honor either to those who, being formed on those antique models, became writers, and from consideration of them, according to the work's inner value, equally abundant fruits can be gathered.[64]

Klimaszewski here refers to the concept of exemplary works from which the art of writing can be learned, which had earlier appeared in, to name one source, the analyses of Ludwik Osiński. Reading these works is supposed to teach writers how to express their own thoughts (by shaping them to become authorities on taste and teaching them their language), but also – through the pursuit of other references in the text – to help them expand their knowledge and discover other literary texts. The trait of exemplarity can be ascribed not only to ancient authors, but also to their modern heirs, and thus philological analysis should be concerned with the latter as well. To justify this view, Klimaszewski refers to the experience of French literature and two of its great authorities: Voltaire and Corneille:

> Despite the superstition of our age, resulting from too exaggerated opinions of philology and commentaries of classical Authors, whose works are the only ones deemed to require such study, Voltaire's commentaries on Corneille's tragedies appeared and were pronounced at once to be superfluous, but time has showed how many of the remarks contained therein proved useful to our translator of Corneille's works.[65]

Thus the commentary serves to translate the text in two ways: from one language to another, and also to explicate it for later times – commentaries that are initially superfluous become increasingly useful with the passage of time. They therefore are always helpful where there is some distance, including the distance resulting from the difference between sender and receiver:

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[63]Published earlier as a separate article in *Dziennik Wileński*, vol. 8. 1829, pp. 433-443.

[64]H. Klimaszewski, *Rozbiór poezyj Stanisława Trembeckiego*, Wilno 1830, pp. 5 –6.

[65]Ibid., p. 6.

> While not all texts are equally accessible to every reader: because often writers are accustomed to take the measure of their readers' disposition from themselves, and therefore we can easily perceive both the need and usefulness that might be served by an explication of all of Trembecki's writings, especially for readers only now formed, and not overly rich in knowledge of predecessors. The lack of understanding of certain places can lead to distaste or cold admiration for the writings of our great poet, who according to experts on Polish literature, from the large number of rhymers who lent lustre to the second half of the last century, was the only one equal to the poets of ancient Rome, and breathed life into his song with the enchanting spirit of antiquity.[66]

The commentary, it turns out, is essential for understanding the true worth of the poetry and giving the poet his due. That is precisely the goal of the edition of Trembecki, the reason for the undertaking. Klimaszewski points to none other than Borowski and Mickiewicz as his predecessors in the Polish context (as well as the French translator of "Sofijówka," to whom the latter also referred):

> Having ignored many others who essayed their hand at this object, we delighted in reading the analysis of Krasicki's *Monachomachia*, as well as the explication of certain places in Trembecki by A. Mickiewicz, and the footnotes to de Lagarde's translation of *Zofijówka*.[67]

In the commentaries themselves, he truly does follow in their footsteps: naming the rhetorical figures, explicating phrases that are more difficult to understand due to their archaisms or unusual syntax, adding footnotes to clarify factual matters of history and geography, taking note of the verse structure, clarifying literary references (such as conducting two extensive comparisons: of a passage in the "Sofijówka" with Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and of "Powązki" with an analogous work by Naruszewicz).[68] Klimaszewski's edition adds to its conscientious analysis concern for proper presentation of the text – developed through careful comparison of its existing sources – including drawing on classical philological practices. Having described the features of Trembecki's poetry (like Mickiewicz, he points to how it combines knowledge of ancient literature with a feel for old Polish language), he also lists previous editions of his the poet's work and concludes:

> All of these fragmentary collections of Trembecki's poetry, inadequate in all respects, leave open the demand for a complete, or rather critical Edition of at leats all of his known works.

These plans were obstructed by historical developments and Klimaszewski's emigration; nevertheless, this first volume of Trembecki's poetry became an important source of textual variants for later publishers.[69] The little book published in Wilno on the eve of the Rising must therefore be acknowledged as a crowning achievement of classicist practices of literary scholarly analysis.

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[66]Ibid., pp. 6 –7.

[67]Ibid., p. 5.

[68]It should also be noted that where the translations are concerned, they are also commentaries on Trembecki's translation as well as the (originals of the) ancient texts being translated.

[69]See S. Trembecki, *Pisma wszystkie. Wydanie krytyczne* (Complete Works. Critical Edition), vol. 1-2, ed. J. Kott, Warszawa 1953; E. Rabowicz*, Stanisław Trembecki w świetle nowych źródeł* (Stanisław Trembecki in the Light of New Sources), Wrocław 1965; S. Trembecki, *Sofijówka*, published by J. Snopek, Warszawa 2000.
   See E. Wichrowska, op. cit., p. 56.

When we analyze the critical-analytical works or "dissections" and the explications, written using philological methodology, presented above, another sense of the word "rozbiór," or rather, of the verb "rozbierać," from which it derives, comes to mind, the last I shall consider here. According to the lexicographer Linde (and subsequent dictionaries, taking note of this meaning, also repeat his examples), it means:

> *Metaph*. Rozbierać co u siebie rozważać, rozbaczać, roztrząsać; [...]. Rozbierajcie tę rzecz, a dajcie tu poradę. [To take apart something, to consider, to ponder, to discuss. (...) Think this thing over and give us some advice here.] *Budn. Judic 20, 7*. Co noc to rozbierajcie dnia przeszłego sprawy, Tom przystojnie uczynił, tum bogu nieprawy. [Every night think over the affairs of the previous day, what you have done that was becoming, what was unlawful by God.] *J. Kochan Ps. 4*. Dziwnie mowę tę u siebie rozbierali [They thought to themselves singularly over that speech.] *Biel. 433*. Słowa te słusznie pamiętać, pókiśmy żywi, rozbierać i uważać mamy [It is right to remember those words while we live, we should consider and pay attention] *Dambr. 220*. Pomnij to, co rzekę, rozbierać więc z sobą. [Remember what I say, ponder it then to yourself.] *Groch. W. 352*.[70]

Thus in addition to "taking apart," i.e., weighing or considering, certain problems, as people were said to do by means of the verb "rozbierać" in old Polish, people often pondered and took apart words as well and were described doing so with the same word. The Warsaw dictionary here gives an intriguing additional example from Jesuit priest Jakub Wujek's 1593 translation of the Bible: "Rozbiera<j>cie pisma, bo się wam zda, że w nich jest żywot wieczny" ([You study/] Study the Scriptures, because you think that in them is eternal life).[71] "Rozbieranie" may thus be understood to mean careful consideration and thought about words, including words in a text, possibly resulting in or benefiting from a detailed commentary.

Thus, as we have been tracing the meanings of the word "rozbiór," we have also traced the practices it was used to define in the early nineteenth century. This survey enables us to point to some of their shared features. All of these forms of analysis or dissection are connected by the flow of an argument proceeding in a manner following the order of a literary work; these are studies that refer to the text under discussion almost always (with the exception of certain passages in Osiński's lectures, particularly those concerned with longer works) practically line by line (sometimes scene by scene, passage by passage). In the case of analyses presented as commentaries, they appear together with the text under analysis, where in the case of lectures or reviews they quote frequently and extensively. They address the "arrangement" or structure of the work in various forms, as well as the logic of the representations it contains, and evaluate that structure. The multiplicity of the meanings of the word "rozbiór" itself as a term for a certain genre of scholarly text is no doubt related to the lack of clear boundaries between the many forms of utterance functioning in the period in question. A review of a contemporary text, whether literary or scholarly, an analysis of

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[70]S.B. Linde, *Słownik języka polskiego*, vol. 6., Warszawa 1951, entry for "rozebrać."

[71]*Słownik języka polskiego*, ed. J. Karłowicz, op. cit., entry for "rozebrać." This quotation comes from the Gospel of St. John (5:39) and is rendered thus in the King James version: "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me." More recent (and apparently more accurate) translations use "study carefully" or "study diligently" instead of "search" – the passage relates to the Jewish tradition of interpretation and commentary.

a work presented in a university lecture, or a commentary for a print edition could each be called a "rozbiór." In all of these, a similar method of reading was applied, as described above. Naturally individual instances of the method's application differ considerably from each other. Osiński's comparative analysis, with its goal of finding definite rules governing works of literature, the *Rozbiory* by Słowacki that scrutinize ancient classics, and the philological editions of Borowski, Mickiewicz and Klimaszewski all bring out the potential of the late eighteenth century approach to textual analysis, which combines the precision of anatomical dissection, mathematical analysis, or the chemical process of breakdown into parts with the spirit of contemplation of the Scriptures and the verve of a critical review; made richer by the achievements of classical philology, analyses of this type by the "Wilno School" created the model for today's critical editions.

KEYWORDS

S o f i j ó w k a

Stanisław Trembecki

Leon Borowski

A d a m M i c k i e w i c z

HIPOLIT KLIMASZEWSKI

Abstract:

The article presents selected practices of analysis of literary texts adopted in Polish literary scholarship in the first decades of the nineteenth century, particularly those connected with academic work. The variety and simultaneously common features among the various examples of classicist "close reading" are shown through a semantic analysis of the word "rozbiór" which was applied to such readings in the period. The pioneering adaptation of the methods of classical philology to work on a modern text, carried out by critics affiliated with the University of Wilno (now Vilnius), Borowski, Mickiewicz, and Klimaszewski, represents a particular object of interest.

philology

Euzebiusz Słowacki

LUDWIK OSIŃSKI

comparative studies

analysis

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Marta Baron-Milian

Shamefaced Concepts

c r i t i c s :
Rita Felski *Uses of Literature*, Malden 2008.

The various meanings of the peculiar term "manifesto" all refer primarily to public declarations formulated clearly and directly, revealing one's stance. A manifesto uncovers, lays bare, reveals, displays, makes accessible, but no doubt the best word to define what it in fact engages in is "betrayal." The authors of manifestos betray their own views, but also betray the ones(s) to which they owe their allegiance – in betraying the "new" vision, they thus betray what is "old" – tradition. A manifesto is a public undertaking, binding one to maintain a certain posture, to practice a certain form of action with certain effects on art or reality. The word most probably arose from the combination of the words *manus* (hand) and *festus* (attack); a manifesto appears as a real struggle, postulating direct engagement and voluntary exposure to the personal danger of opposition and to the threat issuing from what is being confronted. This aggressive, conflictual aspect throws a specific light on the nature of the manifesto, designated by that risky friction whose stakes are exceptionally serious: action, an attempt to change the state of things.

In her 2008 book *Uses of Literature*, recently translated into Polish as *Literatura w użyciu* (Literature in Use), Rita Felski declares her enthusiastic entry into this fray, but already in the first sentences attempts to neutralize somewhat the risk associated with her endeavour. Introducing her manifesto / un-manifesto ("neither fish nor fowl" in Felski's words), she simultaneously lets it be understood that its conflictual aspect will be only simulated, and the "manifesto" itself, like the literature in the title, will appear in the role of a "manifesto in use." The proof? We find it in the very first sentences of the text:

This is an odd manifesto as manifestos go, neither fish nor fowl, an awkward, ungainly creature that ill-fits its parentage. In one sense it conforms perfectly to type: one-sided, skew-eyed, it harps on one thing, plays only one note, gives one half of the story. Writing a manifesto is a perfect excuse for taking cheap shots, attacking straw men, and tossing babies out with the bathwater. Yet the manifestos of the avant-garde were driven by the fury of their againstness […] What follows is, in this sense, an un-manifesto: a negation of a negation, an act of yea-saying not nay-saying, a thought experiment that seeks to advocate, not denigrate."[1]

Felski thus announces that in contrast to the avant-garde manifest-writers who sought to "knock art off its pedestal," and whose methods have permeated literary theory, she wishes to propose "a negation of a negation," an affirmative gesture, on whose foundation, according to her, the construction of a new and positive reading project will become possible.

Przemysław Czapliński once wrote that a literary manifesto is the "troubled conscience of literary studies"[2] – as a genre that unambiguously and undeliberatively settles questions that literary scholarship is indisputably and for obvious reasons incapable of settling. Aiming to be ostentatiously unscientific, it formulates extremely

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[1] R. Felski: *Uses of Literature*, Malden 2008, p. 1.

[2] P. Czapliński: "Manifest literacki jako tekst literaturoznawczy" (The Literary Manifesto as a Literary Studies Text) *Pamiętnik Literacki* 1992, no. 1, p. 74.

"irresponsible,"[3] unambiguous, severe judgments and postulates, which neither have to function as nor seek a solution. In this sense the opening confrontation of Felski's literary scholarship project with the avant-garde gesture is surprising, appearing as it does to dream of committing what literary studies have defined as the "sin," proper to criticism, of evaluation, is surprising; but at the same time, she defensively demurs before doing so by accident.

What Is Literary Theory Ashamed Of?

Literature is not written for literary scholars. Though that conviction is not formulated so explicitly in the book, there can be no doubt that it underpins Rita Felski's reflections and could happily wave on the banner of her manifesto/un-manifesto, because if Felski declares herself particularly strongly against something, it is the elite nature of literary studies. For its part, that elite nature is founded on the removal beyond the horizon of literary scholars' research pursuits of the reading motivations and experiences of the non-professional reader, which appear to the perspective of theory (in its various iterations) as particularly shameful. As Felski writes, "[t]hanks to the institutional entrenchment of negative aesthetics, a spectrum of reader responses has been ruled out of court in literary theory, deemed shamefully naïve at best, and rationalist, reactionary, or totalizing at worst."[4] The concept of negative aesthetics, which Felski uses interchangeably with the hermeneutics of suspicion, becomes a true sacrificial lamb, burdened by her with blame for that repudiation by literary studies, the blindness to facts of theory's thorough depreciation of "the heterogeneous, and politically variable, uses of literary texts in daily life,"[5] forms of engaging with the text, motivations to read or affects that accompany reading. She therefore asks whether there exists some kind of alternative to the specialist hermeneutics of suspicion, attempting to oppose the scepticism and negation that are so deeply rooted in literary theory with a peculiar kind of affirmation. As she postulates passionately in the introduction to her analysis: "When scepticism has become routinized, self-protective, even reassuring, it is time to become suspicious of our entrenched suspicions,

to question the confidence of our own diagnostic authority, and to face up, once and for all, to the force of our attachments."[6] Nonetheless, it is hard to resist the conviction that for all its seductive power, Felski's project is based on the naive dream of a return to a state of lost innocence. Though she herself would surely be cheered by the imputation of naïveté.

The title of the Polish translation, *Literature in Use*, immediately refers us to the lexicon of pragmatism, while the English original, *Uses of Literature*, tells us a great deal more about the content of the book than the Polish version, in which the heterogeneous nature of the act of reading, and of readers' experience, when in fact its opposition to the stereotypical homogenization of reading is what's at stake in Felski's entire project. The project relates above all to readers' search for literature's various applications and uses, the varied motivations and purposes for which people read, and finally, the varied forms of aesthetic engagement with the text, in contrast with critical reading, which does not leave room for them in the space of theory. There is no doubt that Felski would subscribe to the statement by Ryszard Koziołek, in the book *Dobrze się myśli literaturą* (Literature is Good to Think With), which has been so much discussed in recent months: "Literature should be used, if necessary even for holding up a cabinet with a broken leg by means of books."[7] In fact, Felski herself writes in similar terms, presenting words as "hand-me-downs, well-worn tokens used by countless others before us, the detritus of endless myths and movies […]."[8] It is not, however, the problem of the use of literature itself that is the topic of her book, but the attempt to find out what different purposes it can serve, what applications it can have for readers, who here become precisely users, making use – depending on their needs – of the broadly diverse functions offered by literary texts.

For a manifesto, however, Felski's work defines its adversaries with exceptional indefinition: their image gets washed out in the pursuit of new metaphors, only to next take on the shape of an opposition so extreme that

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[3] Ibid., p. 75.

[4] Felski, *Uses*, p. 132.

[5] Ibid., p. 13.

[6] Ibid., p. 22.

[7] R. Koziołek: *Dobrze się myśli literaturą.* Wydawnictwo Czarne. Wołowiec 2016, p. 16.

[8] Felski, *Uses*, p. 31.

it is impossible to maintain. In only a few pages, Felski settles accounts with all of literary theory, dividing its space into two leading trends, identified with two styles of reading, the theological and the ideological. In the first case literature would allegedly be valued for its otherness and the quality of being exceptional, while in the second its relation to social reality would become its crucial element. Let us begin, then, from the traditional (and, it must be admitted, very well-worn) opposition between "the Scylla of political functionalism and the Charybdis of art for art's sake […]."[9] It is nonetheless hard to say why all ways of reading that question literature's autonomy are accused by Felski of instrumentalization, political functionalism and the definition of literature as ideology, which, in her view, means having "decided ahead of time that literary works can be objects of knowledge but never sources of knowledge."[10] Why should an approach to the study of literature (or art) within the perspective of the influence of external forces that violate the integrity of its boundaries, one opposed to the belief in its autonomous nature, constitute an unequivocal resignation from the cognitive function? And furthermore, why should belief in the causative power of literature, which can be a sphere of projected social change and a space of real public debate, eliminate its specific knowledge, being a kind of conglomerate of individual articulation and collective consciousness and artistic form? Why should it depreciate such knowledge, instead of welcoming it as boon that certainly enhances the conditions for the potential formation of artistic agency? Why should every form of opposition to the vision of art's autonomy automatically "force an equivalence of textual structures with social structures"?[11] Felski's book does not provide answers to these questions. At the same time, both sides of the dispute – drawn, it must be said, in what can only be called a quite reductive vein – are accused by her, also somewhat traditionally, of reductionism, in order to then build her own project in the narrow middle ground, one which, needless to say, is not so radical or so reductive; nor is it in any way despotic, but rather "respectful,"

affirmative and "dialogic."[12] And, above all, it submits the hermeneutics of suspicion to its own suspicions.

Regardless of the various doubts aroused especially by the generalities – developed at a fairly high level – of Rita Felski's polemic with literary theory, things only really begin to heat up (and become highly engaging) when she begins pitilessly enumerating the chief sins of academic reading, among which the biggest relates to the marginalization of the theory of reading and the political situation of reading. In this light, historians of literature take cover behind history and do not ask questions about the contemporary importance of the text, its potential participation in current social debates. In addition, the rhetoric imposed by theoreticians is alleged to have drowned out readerly reactions in general. Felski thus exaggerates the antagonisms between reading specialists, who not only create a hierarchy in the world of literature but also project the nature of the act of reading itself, and "ordinary readers." That distance is directly proportional to the distance separating the lowly motives, pronounced to be primitive by experts, that animate the "masses" from a "proper" reading, available to a handful of initiates. Felski simultaneously lays bare the tremendous problem theory has with the fact that literature can be evaluated for reasons other than those recognized and accepted by theory itself.

Starting from there, Felski shows the necessity of freeing academic reading from the enclave of elitism that it has created itself. The point of departure for this gesture must nonetheless be the perception of literary studies' great oversight: everyday motives for reading, readers' practices and the political situation of reading. That leads us to the need to break down the opposition between low and high, popular and artistic, revealing the class-basednature of the contempt with which elite readers treat "ordinary" readers. And this is undoubtedly the most interesting, most important element of the plan developed in *Uses of Literature* and the one most needed by literary theory itself. Felski thus writes her manifesto / un-manifesto, cutting herself off from the avant-garde sensibility which she claims marks most theoretical gestures, above all in terms of their drive to unmask universal, everyday practices and aspirations to expose "false consciousness." Instead she

[9] Ibid., p. 9.
[10] Ibid., p. 7.
[11] Ibid., p. 8.

[12] Ibid., p. 7.

takes as her guides – with no fear of the risk it entails – "common sense" and intuition. As Felski declares, "My argument is not a populist defense of folk reading over scholarly interpretation, but an elucidation of how, in spite of their patent differences, they share certain affective and cognitive parameters."[13] Felski takes philosophical and simultaneously methodological inspiration from a phenomenology of reading that "calls for an undogmatic openness to a spectrum of literary responses […]."[14] Dreading the accusation of ahistoricism, she nevertheless wades into a project of neophenomenology that unites phenomenology with a historical and sociopolitical perspective.

In her effort to implement the goals she has set herself, Rita Felski creates a real cabinet of curiosities in her book, in which a multitude of concepts despised by literary theory are gathered together, generally speaking, those derided by the hermeneutics of suspicion, which undeniably becomes the main adversary in Felski's reflections.[15] Proceeding down this path, Felski distinguishes four categories within which she organizes her thought: *recognition*, *enchantment*, *knowledge* and *shock*. These concepts, she claims, "name quite ordinary structures of experience that are also political, philosophical, and aesthetic concepts fanning out into complex histories."[16] These four keywords define the various forms of engagement with reading, designating the axis of interaction between reader and text. In these four concepts, she would have us feel intimations of "the shadowy presence of some venerable aesthetic categories"[17] such as anagnorisis, beauty, *mimesis* and the sublime, which she seeks to submit to revision, formulating the reasons why we read and the values based on which the nature and functions of literature are defined, offering an answer diametrically opposed to the one that emerges from the main areas of literary studies. In Felski's opinion, the most important task

of literature does not boil down to either eliciting aesthetic rapture or action in the sphere of power relations. It is situated in other registers – to which academic literary studies remain blind.

Self-Discovery or Self-Deception?

The first of the crucial categories Felski uses to describe reading practices is recognition, a process that joins together cognitive function and affective charge and involves "finding yourself in the work," i.e., what Dorian Gray experienced when reading a book that was presumably Huysmans's *À rebours*, recognizing in its hero his "prototype", and nourishing the belief that the book was really about his own life, written out before he came to live through it. On the one hand, recognition is therefore a narcissistic allegorization, while on the other hand, it expresses an extremely unprofessional readerly naïveté, which is why Felski finds it so very interesting. And thus for reasons exactly opposite to those for which it appeared as a functional category for twentieth century theory, in which recognition serves exploration only to the extent that it is an erroneous or false recognition, revealing simultaneously the illusory character of self-knowledge and the construction of a perpetually miscarried image of the self, who is doomed to experience non-identity with its own self. The two key inspirations here are the stories, reproduced in various forms in cultural studies, of the Lacanian mirror and the Althusserian policeman. Felski, however, shows the paradox in which the philosophical and literary scholarly critique of recognition becomes entangled: "If we are barred from achieving insight or self-understanding, how could we know that an act of misrecognition had taken place? The critique of recognition, in this respect, reveals an endemic failure to face up to the normative commitments underpinning its own premises […]."[18] And here, it is hard to resist the impression that the discussions undertaken by Felski begin and end at the surface level of the problem, and the rhythm of quick leaps between threads are determined rather by pragmatic ends. Felski's narrative in fact comes off much better when it is based on direct analysis and interpretation of works (she then frequently draws truly revelatory conclusions) than when it ascends into a high

[13]Ibid., p. 14.

[14]Ibid., p. 18.

[15]Felski further develops this thread in her 2015 book *The Limits of Critique*, devoted precisely to polemics with the demystificatory imperative that drives contemporary literary studies. See R. Felski: *The Limits of Critique*, Chicago 2015.

[16]Felski, Uses of Literature, p. 17.

[17]Ibid., p. 15.

[18]Ibid., p. 28.

level of generality. At that level, for example, we see her tendency to use the rather transparent category of "the reader," not anchored in reality and not subject to social, economic, historical or geographical conditions (all the more astonishing in the work of a scholar from a feminist school of literary criticism). Things are utterly different in the case of her concrete analyses – so it is difficult to explain the asymmetry that arises between analyses and generalized judgments which cause the concepts invoked to lose their historical and social precision, becoming somehow homogeneous, abstracted from the network of factors that determine them.

Felski attempts to capture the various forms that recognition can take – she points to self-intensification, relating to self-recognition in what is similar, and self-extension, the recognition of the self in experiences that are completely other to it. At the same time, the distance separating self-intensification from self-extension opens a broad set of problems that no doubt constitute an important and intriguing area for post-colonial studies or economic literary criticism. It is difficult to speak of recognition as something permanent, graspable or structurally defined. We can instead speak of "the shock of recognition." The moment of recognition is an illusory pinprick to subjectivity, whose nature is undeniably reductive. Literature is ascribed the function of "a mediating role in this drama of self-formation"[19] when we are let down by social and political forms of struggle for recognition, acknowledgement, and inclusion in the community, which reveal their inadequacy in confrontation with exclusion and alienation. In this sense, according to Felski, art, by means of aesthetic experience, has the power to provide a sense of identification and inclusion in the community. The tragedy of non-recognition is simultaneously a tragedy of misunderstanding and of not belonging. In this respect, recognition fuses in itself the personal and the public, becoming also a kind of social diagnosis (Felski analyses this fact very interestingly using the example of the historical identification of women with the heroines of Ibsen's dramas, indicating a crucial gender asymmetry in the space of reception). Recognition in the political sense means not only "maturity" and the

acknowledgement of difference or otherness, but also the acknowledgement of its value. In the realm of identity, meanwhile, it relates to the acquisition of self-knowledge, which is linked to the process of self-analysis. Felski shows, however, that those two meanings in no way contradict each other, as they remain in the sphere of questions of identity. Recognition itself oscillates between "knowledge and acknowledgement, the epistemological and the ethical, the subjective and the social […]."[20]

It is difficult, nonetheless, to agree with Felski's thesis that "books will often function as lifelines for those deprived of other forms of public acknowledgement. Until very recently, for example, such deprivation stamped the lives of women who desired other women."[21] Is "recognition" and the attempt at identification really what literature should have to offer people deprived of public acknowledgement and excluded? Should its function not be situated in a completely different place? Recognition as Felski formulates it means that literature becomes a form of inherently absurd substitution that the reader would temporarily feel obligated to find satisfying since in any case there is no way to change reality. In offering that kind of "miserable consolation," assuaging longings, answering the desire for change with empty phantasms, literature positions itself outside of efforts to influence reality, outside attempts to develop a project of real social intervention which might actually change the situation of the unacknowledged, might work in opposition to exclusion. And though Felski writes that the potential for recognition lies within literature precisely because it is "a narrative, not a sociological screed,"[22] because it acts as fiction, because the encounter with it is an aesthetic experience, it is hard not to agree with her but still harder to stifle the conviction that this is not where literature's function should end.

Disenchantment with Enchantment

The next part of the book could not exist without the belief that literature has seductive power, that it captivates with its charms, spellbinds, intoxicates but

[19] Ibid., p. 33.

[20] Ibid., p. 49.
[21] Ibid., p. 43.
[22] Ibid., p. 44.

also, as follows naturally from that, deceives. Literature enchants and disenchants simultaneously. The next of the despised concepts invoked by Felski is precisely *enchantment*, which she describes as "a term with precious little currency in literary theory, calling up scenarios of old-school professors swooning in rapture over the delights of Romantic poetry. Contemporary critics pride themselves on their power to disenchant, to mercilessly direct laser-sharp beams of critique at every imaginable object. In Lyotard's words, "demystification is an endless task."[23] At the same time, inevitably linked with enchantment is the abandonment of the distanced position that makes the critical gaze possible – that position is discarded on behalf of high-intensity engagement, the renunciation of one's own autonomy and self-control. Our capacity for thought, our predispositions, scepticism, causative agency and any possibility of taking action then become irrelevant. Especially since, as the example of Emma Bovary shows, what we are dealing with is often the "erotic undertow of aesthetic enchantment […]."[24] In what she writes about both recognition and enchantment, however, Felski does not make use of the full potential implicit in either affective criticism or somatic criticism, with its analysis of the body's involvement in both the creative act and the act of reception.

The anti-intellectualism of the concept of enchantment is, in fact, obvious and places it, as Felski declares, dangerously close to the margins of secularized thought[25] in connection with the siren song of art: "Enchantment matters because one reason that people turn to works of art is to be taken out of themselves, to be pulled into an altered state of consciousness"[26]; "Enchantment in this sense is the antithesis and enemy of criticism. To be enchanted is to […] lose one's head and one's wits […]."[27] Felski draws attention to the fact that Max Weber's thesis on modern disenchantment with the world, a thesis which has attained enormous popularity, is increasingly

criticized by scholars who point to both the affective nature of modern process and their entanglement in magical and mythical thinking. Curiously, the concept of enchantment conceals, in Felski's view, a peculiar kind of blind spot that causes academic scholars to completely dismiss this seductive and intoxicating aspect of literary or (perhaps especially) filmic work, displacing it beyond the area of reflection on reception and in the process falsifying the image presented therein. The category of enchantment, as explored by Felski, though it appears similar to the concept of *jouissance*, is nonetheless radically detached from it. As we read in Felski: "[*Jouissance*] was a forbidding, highbrow, Parisian kind of pleasure, a transgressive frisson inspired by the Marquis de Sade, not chanteuse Sade."[28]

The myth of the siren song, particularly apposite to this narrative of enchantment, becomes for Adorno and Horkheimer in the Dialectic of Enlightenment a sign of the fulfilled desire for a "'euphoric suspension of the self' […]."[29] The nostalgic and unequivocally conservative concept of enchantment fixes the reader in a state of immobility in the form of a surrender to captivity at the hands of external forces, a relinquishment of one's freedom and causative agency, a passive experience of pleasure which is inescapably allied with the free market mechanism of the production of needs. And it seems the most dangerous among the catalogue of concepts derided by literary scholarship and presented to us by Felski.

Deceived Knowledge

The third key reading motivation is, we are told, designated by the knowledge people seek out in texts, and the cognitive function of literature. The questions "What does literature know?" or "What does literature not know?" present us with the concepts, heavily overused by theory, of *mimesis*, truth and representation, through the prism of which Felski in *Uses of Literature* attempts to critically read the basic foundations of several theoretical schools. She presents

[23]Ibid., p. 54.

[24]Ibid., p. 53.

[25]See ibid., p. 57.

[26]Ibid., p. 76.

[27]Ibid., p. 56.

[28]Ibid., p. 60.

[29]Ibid., p. 71; quoting Adorno and Horkheimer, *The Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Stanford 2002, p. 26.

the history of literary studies as an archive of conflicting metaphors for truth, on one side of which we find appearance, illusion, delusion, shadow, and the big lie of falsification, and on the other, a fairy-like spectacle of glass metaphors, the mirror, the window looking out on the world and its reflection. In the space between the two shores of this metaphorical archive, Felski takes on the fairly backbreaking task of attempting to look "differently" at the problem of art's referential obligations and predispositions, at the distance between realism, the "reality effect," and literature's negative knowledge, showing the history of thought on the truth of art as a "chronicle of outgrown errors […]."[30] The access point of this part of the analysis is the formulation of the following thesis: "Literature's relationship to knowledge is not only negative or adversarial; it can also expand, enlarge, or re-order our sense of how things are."[31] This recognition, undeniably a rather misty one, is superseded by the question that determines the actual direction of Felski's polemic: the problem of the connection between any type of literary knowledge and its form. Felski chooses as her opponents those whose view of the situation is different, i.e., who claim that when the purpose of the text becomes the transmission of knowledge, formal questions shift to the background. And once again, this stereotypically drawn, rather abstract opponent is not a flesh-and-blood opponent, lacking as it usually does a name or a concrete textual form, but materializes only as the sum of reported views that here serve pragmatic purposes ("uses of theory"?). This "faceless" opponent in its various incarnations is the hero of all parts of the book and stirs the most doubts in it, because, to take the example of her thoughts on cognitive function, do we really find in the history of literary studies so many examples of an approach in which literary knowledge is supposed to be completely separate from its artistic form (from problems to do with genre, for example)? Felski seems here to do battle with the long-discredited idea of the autonomy, objectivity and detachment from the contingencies of language of scholarly and scientific judgments, and in truth it is hard not to see a hint of tilting at windmills here. For does not strenuous argumentation

on behalf of claims that "all forms of knowing are shaped by [...] conventions of genre,"[32] that "mimesis is by no means limited to realism,"[33] or that *mimesis* "is an act of creative imitation, not mindless copying,"[34] and that metaphors can fulfil a cognitive function, resemble a debate with an imaginary interlocutor?

In focusing on an analysis of ways of conveying objects, mainly in the poetry of Pablo Neruda, Felski attempts to show how literature can examine materiality and social interactions, on the one hand "taking us in" toward imagined worlds, while on the other leading us toward referentiality. Felski tries to show literary knowledge as having been constantly led astray, as an original and fully entitled form of social knowledge (unlike Terry Eagleton, who defines it as an "analogue of knowledge" or "something like knowledge") inseparably linked with artistic form. Her diagnosis is very important, but the author stops right at this point, not going any further and not trying to define what exactly the unique nature of this literary knowledge is to be based on, how its full authorization can be justified, what makes it a form of knowledge accessible to discourses of other systems, what proper significance artistic form has for its shape, how the social production of literary knowledge takes place, what connection it has with individual and collective experience, what sense it can be socially useful, and especially, what exactly this literary knowledge has to offer the reader – for he or she is, after all, the main focus of Felski's book. We are here undoubtedly witnessing a very suggestive and intriguing rescue of literature from the depths of cognitive failures and referential disasters, but we do not in fact get the long-awaited answer to the question of what its cognitive victories would involve.

Let's Talk About Shock

In the final part of the book, Felski examines the abilities of literary texts to shock or elicit outrage. At the same time, she opposes the position of what has been called ethical criticism, within which Martha Nussbaum and

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[30] Ibid., p. 82.
[31] Ibid., p. 83.

[32] Ibid., p. 84.
[33] Ibid.
[34] Ibid., p. 85

Wayne Booth have devised judgments on the particular kind of "friendly" relationship formed between the reader and the book. As Felski argues, if, in our contemporary world of blunted sensitivity, "the aura of revolution is now a styling and marketing advantage, if transgression is harnessed to the selling of sneakers and a cornucopia of sexual perversions is only a mouse-click away, then surely the project of the avant-garde is irrevocably exhausted. Under such conditions, shock is irrevocably stripped of any remaining shred of authenticity."[35] Thus, Felski once again proposes to detach our grasp and definition of shock from the avant-garde tradition, a project she deems irretrievably worn down, today no longer possessing any subversive or emancipatory potential and stripped of the ability to break down social and aesthetic taboos. The avant-garde artistic movements from the early twentieth century, in Felski's view, succeeded in "frenetically debunking mythologies and slaughtering all sacred cows except one: the authenticity of their own antinomian stance." Aggressive and extreme forms of engagement aimed at bourgeois logic, representing a powerful, instinctual cry, were supposed to act like an electric shock, but it has unexpectedly been neutralized by the assimilation of what was avant-garde into the mainstream, through the turning of what was ostentatiously anti-economic into a good investment.

Where the shock-driven aspirations of the avant-garde to demolish and reformulate the social order ended up disappointing, the art of shock in fact does, Felski claims, reveal its emancipatory and subversive properties, overcoming stereotypes and rules, when it foregoes clearly defined social goals. Shock that tears down the schemata of perception, but also the space and time in which perception is happening, becomes, by virtue of its immediacy, "the antithesis of the blissful enfolding and voluptuous pleasure that we associate with enchantment. Instead of being rocked and cradled, we find ourselves ambushed and under assault."[36]

In showing the effects of shock using the example of classical tragedies (in particular Euripides's *Bacchae*),

Felski draws attention to the lack of justification for the avant-garde rejection of the entire tradition as relating to the might of patriarchal authority and a kind of legitimization of the social order, where in fact, the transgressive and subversive potential of, for example, classical tragedy contains, she finds, significantly greater, timeless power to affect than is possible in the case of most avant-garde gestures. The aesthetic of shock, according to Felski, is not up to the tasks that the avant-garde ethos binds it to, and which are supposed primarily to boil down to a correlation between individual or collective shock and the coming transformation of society.

The aesthetic of shock is only superficially asocial in nature, however, being determined in equal parts by problems relating to class, race and gender issues. The fascination with ugliness in art, Felski claims, following Bourdieu, reveals its fundamental character to be inescapably class-based, suited as it is to the sublimated tastes of the upper middle class. On the other hand, she shows how literary provocation has historically been a male domain, representing a peculiar kind of attack on stereotypical feminine prudishness. Even if it was a series of feminine figures who in fact became symbols of the bestial, the procreative, the corporeal and the disgustingly natural. That is above all typical of the avant-garde and modernism. Felski, in her riveting analyses (for example, of the work of Sara Kane) here provides proof of the shift in contemporary culture, in keeping with whose current a particular kind of aesthetic of shock has begun to dominate in women's writing. Felski explains that "[a]s a history of expectations about the nature of femininity comes under intense stress, ever more female writers are turning toward an aesthetic of provocation and perversity."[37] The shock, however, is being absorbed by the capitalist trends of late modernity. In this sense, its subversive nature has become suspect. It has ceased to be an expression of rebellion and instead is a compromise with the free market, which – again, as in the case of enchantment, though also completely differently – found in the aesthetic of shock a supremely good tool for satisfying the cravings and needs of the mass audience.

[35] Ibid., p. 107.
[36] Ibid., p. 113.

[37] Ibid., p. 126.

The Trouble with the Full-time Reader

In *Uses of Literature*, Rita Felski sketches out the conditions in which a peculiar type of "complex of diminishing returns" of the humanities and the depreciation of both literature itself and reading has taken shape, becoming one of the main sources of apathy and discouragement among literary scholars, and vice versa. As many reviewers have noted, Felski sees a possible antidote for the existing state of affairs in the continuing efforts to build a bridge between theory and general knowledge and common sense, yet does not place her complete trust in that solution. She repeatedly harmonizes with the voice of Antoine Compagnon, who in his chronicle of skirmishes in literary theory writes in the spirit of common sense: "The aim of theory is […] the defeat of common sense. It contests it, criticizes it, denounces it as a series of fallacies […] theory makes it seem indispensable to begin by freeing oneself from these fallacies in order to talk about literature. But the resistance of common sense to theory is unimaginable. […] common sense never gives up, and theorists are obstinate. Having failed to settle their accounts with their bêtes noires once and for all, they become entangled."[38]

Despite the promised affirmation that Felski attempts to advance and oppose to the negation, critique and suspicion she finds so intolerable, despite the fact that she wants to cheer up the so-called "common" or "ordinary" reader by the mere fact that literary studies have not completely forgotten about him or her, *Uses of Literature* do not fill one with optimism. Despite the apologia for the many possible uses and applications of literature, each chapter seems underpinned by the belief that literature, when it all comes down to it, can achieve very little, has relatively low causative power, and is tasked not with projecting change but rather gratifying the narcissistic needs of the "ordinary" reader, for whom identification and enchantment are to replace what he lacks, becoming, for example, a substitute for belonging to what he or she is, in a social sense, excluded from. So the claim goes: it is all right, we don't have much, but look, we might have had nothing at all! Even though the various attempts to move

outside the elitism of literary studies are unquestionably the most intriguing, relevant, and utterly necessary part of Felski's project, she nevertheless fails to give voice to those readers who are not full-time specialists. A full-time reader herself, she speaks in their name while speculating on the subject of their motivations. We therefore do not get an image of how a part-time reader reads, but at best how a full-time reader reads on her day off, or after hours. And that is, to a great extent, what the book is about.

In this affirmation of reading, there are a few pieces of the puzzle that appear still to be missing – a curtain of silence falls on the fact that the influence of books on the reader is not always a good one, and that reading itself is class-conditioned, generating class conditions and distinctions in terms of both the motivation and goals for reading as well as readerly reactions. On the one hand, then – and this is doubtless the most important gesture in Rita Felski's entire project – she seeks to draw literature out of the literary studies enclave, which establishes hierarchy and tries to turn reading, and above all, understanding, into an elite activity. Felski focuses her attention on the egalitarian, everyday, universal aspect of reading, but at the same time promotes reading as an individual activity, serving personal goals, and does not give adequate consideration to collective reception, or, more importantly, the social impact of literature (to which she only pays attention, with truly revelatory results, in her analysis of the reception of Ibsen's *Hedda Gabler*). And through this omission, her otherwise fascinating depiction of literature as a machine for satisfying individual needs would appear to lose most. The motivations for reading, enumerated and inspected by Felski, correspond to the beloved tools of the free market that have become the best way to ensure the profitability of each publishing initiative: literature as product wants to somehow shock, enchant or come out against the narcissistic desire for identification while simultaneously offering the individual greater self-knowledge and thereby self-improvement. But those are not the uses of literature that we would really have liked to consider.

[38] A. Compagnon, *Literature, Theory, and Common Sense*, trans. Carol Cosman, Princeton 2004, p. 193.

KEYWORDS | ABSTRACT | NOTE ON THE AUTHOR ● ● ●

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Abstract:

This text represents an attempt to analyze the main premises of Rita Felski's theoretical project presented in her book *Uses of Literature*, translated into Polish as *Literatura w użyciu* (Literature in Use). The American scholar's reflections, focused on problems of reception aesthetic and constituting a polemic with the concept, crucial to contemporary literary theory, of the hermeneutics of suspicion and with critical theory, are here interpreted using the four concepts relied on by Felski in the book: recognition enchantment, knowledge and shock. They constitute various forms of readerly engagement with the text and various forms of use, of applications of literature in practices of everyday, non-specialist reading. This article identifies Felski's attempt to disrupt the elitism of literary studies and their exclusionary stance toward non-professional readers as one of the most important elements in her project as put forth in the book.

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Lucyna Marzec

Here and Now: Literature. Use, Feel, Experience

c r i t i c s :
Rita Felski *Uses of Literature*, Malden 2008

At a moment when we have practically abandoned the practice of reading books – as the statistics on reading testify – and gloomy diagnoses are intensifying from both literary theoreticians and poets, the most important question facing literary studies turns out to be why we read at all. How does it happen that there are individuals amongst us who – despite the equally powerful allure of historical reconstructions, escape rooms, computer games, strolls in shopping centres, discount streaming network memberships and the facebook social reality show – occasionally seek out literature?

In his latest book, *Litery* (Letters), Tomasz Różycki writes with deep irony:

> Dzisiaj poznasz czytelnika.
> To robak, mieszka wśród liter.
>
> Był nikim, teraz jest królem.
> Miał umrzeć, ale nie umiał.
>
> Był nikim, teraz ma wszystko.
> Misję, wpływ, stanowisko.
>
> Wystarczy, że komuś się przyśni.
> Wystarczy, że ktoś o nim myśli[1].

(Today you'll meet a reader. / Hes a worm who lives among letters. / He was nobody, now he's king. / He was supposed to die but didn't know how. / He was nobody, now he has everything. / A mission, influence, a position. / It's enough if he appears in someone's dream. / It's enough if somebody thinks about him.)

Joseph Hillis Miller is pitiless in his diagnosis: literary studies with their clinical, deconstructionist and cultural studies readings are leading to the death of literature, whose influence and cultural importance do not distinguish it from (new) media's virtual worlds; like them, it is a product that opens the gates to enchantment and distraction in another reality.[2] Those gates have lost their power of attraction; the dangerous and alluring sphinx does not stand guard over them because mass access and the concomitant phenomenon of highly specialized reading practices have stripped literature of its last remaining veils of mystery. The centrifugal force of literature – drawn from enthusiastic childhood reading by readers lacking the tools of analysis and interpretation – have given way to the increasingly powerful status of literary studies and theory, breaking the literary text down into its basic elements, in order to lay bare its ideological and cultural entanglements.

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[1] T. Różycki, "Kryzys czytelnictwa" (The Crisis of Readership), in *Litery*, Kraków 2016, p. 94.

[2] J. H. Miller, *On Literature*, New York 2002.

The American deconstructionist is only seemingly nostalgic or melancholic: since other virtual worlds (social networks, internet or TV series, computer games) operate according to the same principles as literature, then they, too, sooner or later, will land in the hands of media scholars, sociologists or game studies specialists, who after a phase of enchantment will begin their pitiless vivisection, soon to be joined by conscious users and those on the side of social knowledge. In other words, Miller argues for a truth which is not new: that knowledge kills the object of knowledge, and that technologies (including writing) are fugacious (historically variable) tools for assuaging the "primal" need for losing ourselves, intoxication, enthrallment with some sort of drug. For Miller, literature was such a narcotic, while the new ones do not speak to him, so that he sounds like an opium eater surrounded by cocaine sniffers or a cocaine sniffer among ecstasy takers (as the singer Fisz has it, "All these new drugs go to my head" – and that could be transposed to the situation of a devoted lover of literature; in fact romantic, narcotic intoxication with literature has been a frequent theme of poetry and poetasting).

Miller's analyses arouse my suspicion because they separate, as a general principle, professional from amateur reading, as if there existed only two possibilities: ecstatic reading "through enchantment," involving immediate suffocation by the ideology of the text in question, or reading without illusions, reclaiming the truth, and simultaneously draining the text of all pleasure… Real practices of reading (whether daily or holiday, occasional) seem in fact to be complex, multi-layered and not following a model. Their intricacies are discussed without any tendency toward reductionism or binary oppositions in Rita Felski's *Uses of Literature*,[3] while a powerful counterpoint to Miller's skeptical diagnoses is the earlier work of French literary scholar Pierre Bayard, *How to Talk About Books You Haven't Read*,[4] based on a message that would surely be disputed by other voices besides Miller and Polish reading statistics: it is books (and especially belles lettres) that give us a sense of being at home in culture and society, because without conversations about what we've read and without the language that literature offers us, we are culturally decrepit and compliant with forces we cannot comprehend (like the despairing subject of the famous poem by Leopold Staff who cries "O guide, thou art blind and mute!"). Bayard's literature-centric position bears the marks of religious devotion; he suggests that without books we will die off, lose our voice, become deprived of our own will. Beside the philosophy of culture of the person of the book, he presents the emancipatory psychology of the reader: we read in order to write; to create, participate in a conversation with other readers, become arboreal or rhizomatous in the world. It is therefore of little importance that when we read we are also not-reading, perceiving individually, partially and interestedly, and furthermore we forget the real content of what we read, and it is not important that we do not discover meanings, only mark the texts with ourselves. As long as the conversation about books continues, culture continues and so does the relational self, involved in the world and self-knowledge.

This line of thought is close to Michał Paweł Markowski (*Życie na miarę literatury* [Life by the Standards of Literature][5]) and Ryszard Koziołek (*Dobrze się myśli literaturą* [Literature is Good to Think With][6]). In the introduction to his book, significantly entitled "A Declaration," Koziołek subtlely polemicizes with a well-known essay, written some years ago, by Markowski, though in fact both authors hold similar views: life with literature is fuller, has deeper meaning – whether in its individual dimension (development of the self), that of intimate relations (of friendship or love), or in the social-cultural realm of politics and great ideas. Markowski sets the problem on the existential blade of a knife: life should be measured using literature, because "literature provides us with a language by means of which we can form an alliance against the nonsensical. Literature in the broad sense, indeed the broadest possible, is the linguistic expression of our existence, the story that gives our life

[3] R. Felski, *Uses of Literature*, New York 2011.

[4] P. Bayard, *How to Talk About Books You Haven't Read*, trans. Jeffrey Mehlman, New York 2007.

[5] M. P. Markowski, *Życie na miarę literatury: eseje*, Kraków 2009.

[6] R. Koziołek, *Dobrze się myśli literaturą*, Wołowie, Kraków 2016.

form";[7] Koziołek elaborates similarly: "Not only does literature provide us with meaning, but it is the sister to the great discourse of meaning, chiefly religion and history. Only she, however, argues that everything is worthy of meaning, that everything deserves the grace of being named: an individual person, an animal, a thing, and whatever happens to them."[8] They have in common a belief in the power of language, which attempts (Markowski) and manages (Koziołek) to name things, which manages (Markowski) and attempts (Koziołek) to create a platform for nonviolent social debate. Both of these authors argue for their assertions as scholars of literature in positions of renown, who remain "ordinary readers," and let themselves be swept away, moved, enchanted by reading without suspending their specialist modes of reading, modified by the influence of successive theoretical gestures, including the "affective turn," the most influential current in recent years, which has legitimized (finally!) the capacity to feel moved and disturbed among those literary scholars' reading bodies fed up with wearing lab coats. After the affective turn, we probably will no longer read – in conferences in hotels, in lecture halls, in newspapers and magazines - in ways that make it possible for poets to oppose, with distaste and facility, "intimate reading" and the academic "analysis and interpretation of a literary work," as in Herbert's famous "Epizod w bibliotece" (Episode in a Library): "A blonde girl is bent over a poem. With a pencil sharp as a lancet she transfers the words to a blank page and changes them into strokes, accents, caesuras. The lament of a fallen poet now looks like a salamander eaten away by ants."[9] The poet places non-professional reading above the reading experience of a Polish Literature student, just as Miller laments the loss of a mode of reading that bridged the division between lay and academic readers. Markowski and Koziołek reject that division, though the languages of their books are products of it, they themselves represent the heights of literary (essayistic) language and literary scholarly analysis, where the salamander lies lifeless in the sun, and the blonde girl does not sow destruction, but gathers,

brings into relief, anchors in social life and her own existence the meanings of the poem she interprets.

Such thinking is soundly defeated by Rita Felski, whose *Uses of Literature* is free both of Miller's decadent skepticism and of the admonition to "Read!" which is implicit or explicit in Bayard, Markowski and Koziołek's books. Felski offers a multilayered analysis of the meaning - in theory and practice – of recognition, enchantment, knowledge, and shock for readers, i.e., the whole spectrum of reader reactions, expectations, habits, *styles of reading* (to use the title of a canonical essay by Michał Głowiński), which represent forms of everyday engagement in reading, corresponding to aesthetic and cognitive categories essential to literary theory. At the same time, Felski presents her argument as the *un-manifesto* of a pragmatist and phenomenologist who keeps her distance from both theological (including post-secular) and ideological currents in literary scholarship, while having at her disposal a comprehensive knowledge of feminist theory and being an experienced practitioner of it: "I want to argue for an expanded understanding of 'use' – one that offers an alternative to either strong claims for literary otherness or the whittling down of texts to the bare bones of political and ideological function. […] 'Use' is not always strategic or purposeful, manipulative or grasping; it does not have to involve the sway of instrumental rationality or a willful blindness to complex form. I venture that aesthetic value is inseparable form use, but also that our engagements with texts are extraordinarily varied, complex and often unpredictable in kind."[10]

Felski underscores how complicated and multidimensional readers are – corporeal and spiritual, politically conscious and simultaneously desiring to acquire knowledge, as well as casual entertainment with a fast-paced novel after a long day at work, sometimes skeptics, sometimes enthusiasts, socially situated but also eluding sociological categorizations. The conjectural background of the reader thus portrayed is naturally American society, considerably more diverse (culturally, ethnically and racially) than the Polish average as drawn

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[7] M. P. Markowski, *Życie na miarę literatury*, p. 77.

[8] R. Koziołek, *Dobrze się myśli literaturą*, p. 15.

[9] Z. Herbert, *Selected Poems*, trans. Czesaw Milosz and Dale Scott, London 1968, p. 64.

[10] R. Felski, *Uses of Literature*, pp. 7-8.

from statistical reports on reading or even than Polish academic professionals, a society that for several decades has manifested its diversity and multiplicity not only in politics but also in institutional academic forms and in developments in theory. At the same time, it is not true that the actual Polish reader is either a consumer of "virtual news" with no interest in literature or an erudite professor who performs psychoanalytical studies of Prus's *Doll* or Leśmian's "Girl." The point is that reflection on the complexity of "reading minorities"' experiences (which Felski calls forms of aesthetic engagement) should be preceded by the acknowledgement and recognition of social, ethnic and cultural minorities, the emancipation of the Polish reader whose first language is Kashubian, the reader whose father has traveled a hard road from the Tatras to Chicago, the reader who is a gay Silesian man, a village innkeeper, and so on, because otherwise, experiences of "intersectional" readings will be viewed as exotic visions or theoretical postulates. Such political and academic gestures remain ahead of us.

Whereas Markowski maintains a division between cool intellectual analysis and affective, corporeal encounter with the text (expressing his preference for the latter), Koziołek consistently pursues a project that joins contextualized historical reading with actualization of the meanings of historical readings, Bayard favors having a "conversation about the book," with the possibility of using literature for many varied purposes, and Miller endures in an aporia (telling us we are damned if we do and damned if we don't), Felski searches out spaces of understanding between theories and presents a vision of eclecticism that is constructive and creative, with the self at its centre. In translating Felski's work, the team of translators affiliated with the translation specialization at the Institute of Polish Philology at Adam Mickiewicz University decided to translate the "self" (and, especially, "selfhood") of her text into Polish as "sobość," grounding the concept, in its Polish incarnation, in the philosophical tradition of Emmanuel Levinas and existentialism, though Felski in fact is not so much invoking the philosophical tradition as the American doxa of Heinz Kohut's self psychology, which is not as popular in Poland as some other concepts of post-Freudian psycho-

analysis. Reflection inspired by self psychology strongly marks Felski's vision of the reader (i.e. *user* of literature). This self occurs at the intersection of subjectivity (the psychological mechanisms and relations that construct the individual) and identity (the social conditions and temporal-spatial positioning of the self), the psychic (unconscious) and the mental (self-conscious), ergo it attempts to describe the human being simultaneously in relation to himself and those around him, and in the situation of social recognition and social self-understanding. The belief in effective mediation between theories and the tendency to build bridges between different languages of literary analysis grows out of the integrational aspect of self psychology, not reductive carelessness or Pollyanna-ish eclecticism- which still does not constitute an argument for adapting such a scholarly approach. Those arguments are: specific readings and interpretations of literary categories that have philosophical rather than psychological underpinnings.

Go Inside Yourself

In her chapter on recognition, Felski comes out against deconstructionist formulations (arguing that the subject recognizes itself erroneously or naively), and existentialist ones (arguing that the subject recognizes itself in a book in order to form a new understanding of itself or undergo a political awakening), pointing to the complex motivations for and practices of self-recognition in literature, which, like readers, elude the grasp of theory's reductive tendencies. "Literary texts invite disparate forms of recognition, serving as an ideal laboratory "Literary texts thus offer an exceptionally rich field for parsing the complexities of recognition. Through their attentiveness to particulars, they possess the power to promote a heightened awareness of the density and distinctiveness of particular life-worlds, of the stickiness of selves. And yet they also spark elective affinities and imaginative affiliations that bridge differences and exceed the literalism of demographic description. Such texts, moreover, can also underscore the limits of knowability through structures of negative recognition that underscore the opacity of persons and their failure to be fully transparent to themselves or others."[11]

[11] R. Felski, *Uses of Literature*, p. 46.

Recognition transcends the mechanism of Bovaristic identification and daydreaming of life becoming "like a romance novel," though it is often based on the two pillars of self-intensification and self-extension. The former is typified by the readerly reaction of "I know what that's like!" which is "triggered by a skillful rendition of the densely packed minutiae of daily life";[12] as home-grown examples, we might cite the discussions about films in Warsaw cafés in Agnieszka Drotkiewicz's *Dla mnie to samo!* (I'll Have What They're Having) or the reminiscences of house parties fuelled by imported booze in Communist-era Szczecin in Inga Iwasiów's *Pięćdziesiątka* (Turning Fifty). The latter makes it possible to read science-fiction, fantasy and historical novels as well as those belonging to other linguistic and cultural spheres, as it involves "coming to see aspects of one-self in what seems distant or strange"[13] and, according to Felski, does not represent a form of the naïve universalization rejected by post-colonial theory, but a necessary condition of reading, leading to various localities with the help of modernism's signposts, that is, toward the demolition of all kinds of self-illusion and the revelation of the terrible consequences of pseudorecognitions. In a metafictional gesture at the end of *Dla mnie to samo*, Drotkiewicz proposes a psychotest to her readers: "Which character in this novel are you?" She thus ironically suggests that someone might actually want to identify with any of them and then might be surprised by the test result, which could lead to a further retrospective analysis of the novel and, in the process, an analysis of the reader's own life. The main character of Iwasiów's *Pięćdziesiątka* speaks straightforwardly about the failures of self-recognition she has experienced and the therapeutic vivisection that may be delivered by psychology, religion, or even literature:

> I was reading, lying with my back to Zbyszek, on my left side. I liked those moments of disconnection, aided by a sleeping pill. The letters began to fade, and turning another page demanded greater effort each time. […] I waited for orgasm the same way. I relaxed my muscles and suppressed the surge. I

knew what would happen: the meaning of words turned into the meaning of lying on my side. The meaning of falling asleep next to him, falling asleep with myself, falling asleep without other people's stories. With the book serving as the instrument for measuring the loss of consciousness.[14]

Replacing a glass of vodka with an orgasm, a book, a sleeping pill, does not bring relief in the midst of successive discussions of "who I was, why I drank, what it all meant." Neither does the autobiographical gesture of narrating to the self about the self alleviate the sense that taking off successive masks of addicted self-delusions ever unveil the essential core of the self. *Pięćdziesiątka* functions as an anti-self-help book for those addicted to searching for meaning and a bucket of cold water for anyone who desires coherent, soothing therapeutic narratives.

The evening reading with a sleeping pill is not so much the character's failure as an expression of Iwasiów's renunciation of any claim to be leading her readers toward a state that awakens recognition. Identification with the heroine of *Pięćdziesiątka* takes place at the level of doubts about identity. Felski asserts that recognition in literature is most often a bitter and painful lesson and does not lead to reassurance or affirmation of our selves, but rather to uncertainty and a sense that there are no ready-made formulas to answer the question of who we are. Furthermore, "the condition of intersubjectivity precludes any programmatic ascription of essential traits to oneself or others. If selfhood is formed in a dialogic and relational fashion, no basis exists for ascribing an unchanging core of identity to one or more members of a group. What it means to be a certain kind of person will shift in accordance with external forces, under the pressure of seismological shifts in attitudes and forms of life. None of us have unmediated access to our own selves, which we are called upon to interpret through the cultural resources available to us,"[15] even when those resources are found disappointing.

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[12] R. Felski, *Uses of Literature*, p. 39.
[13] Ibid.

[14] I. Iwasiów, *Pięćdziesiątka*, Warszawa 2015, p. 251.
[15] R. Felski, *Uses of Literature*, p. 46.

Put A Spell On Me

The question of enchantment with literature is more problematic, because it directs us toward the pleasures, raptures and ecstasies of reading, which are far removed from self-conscious recognitions based on the work of intellect, the basic tool for working with texts. Felski takes on the difficult task of defending both popular literature and nostalgic reading that activates forgotten thrills; she underscores the independence and critical competencies of readers who come to literature seeking enchantment, and above all, shows the inconsistency of theories that devaluate that experience. Felski is right when she argues that the experience of modernism is based as much on irony and scepticism as it is on magical enchantment and oblivion, and that enchantment is not a synonym for passivity, weakness or naïveté. She is correct to detect an overblown ego and superiority complex protecting the divide between elite and mass culture (though the areas of overlap between high and popular art are presented more convincingly by Noël Carroll in *A Philosophy of Mass Art*) and to oppose the moralists who accuse those who partake of a mass culture of shallow consumerism. And yet the disproportion between theoretical divagations and examples of literature's enchantment elicit doubts which are reinforced by the attempt to discover further literary samples proving that it is possible to become enchanted without losing one's head – or to lose it and unabashedly admit having done so (if only temporarily).

Felski cites only one experience of enchantment, and it is not in fact an experience of reading, but that of a viewer of the anime film *Spirited Away*; as a motivational story of overcoming scepticism about the intoxicating power of stories (again filmed ones rather than written) she presents Manuel Puig's *Kiss of the Spider Woman*. She devotes a great deal of space to the confessions of an enchanted deconstructionist, J.H. Miller, mentioned several times above, and quotes Charles Bernstein's epic linguistics-centred poem on literature's captivating power. The predictable and problematic nature of this set of examples is heightened by a discussion of readerly avowals by two queer studies scholars: Joseph Boone, who argues that "close reading, far from being a dry-as-dust exercise in dissecting sentences, entails an ardent involvement with what he calls the numinous power of aesthetic objects";[16] and D. A. Miller, for whom a scholarly interest in Jane Austen is a continuation of childhood reading, marked by "the primal shame of the boy who is caught reading Jane Austen. For such a boy, the lure of Austen's style – what Miller calls its thrilling inhumanness – may offer a temporary severance from a personhood that is felt to be anomalous, queer, out of place."[17] Boone and Miller's declarations are courageous and exceptional, as unconventional as the idea of queer readings performed in the context of Russian formalist practices: what counts for them is the authenticity of the reading experience, and an admission of uncomfortable feelings, whether shame, fear of rejection, bewilderment or dilemmas of identity, has a way of laying bare (in their own examples) the entanglement of the personal with the political, of identity issues and intersubjectivity, of the emancipatory and the subordinated. But even such declarations, made by a professional reader, established at a particular academic institution, are ambiguous: enchantment with the novels of Jane Austen does not arouse any aesthetic doubts, in fact it involves a preference typical of professional readers (Austen being a canonical writer), and the presentation of close reading as an aid to enchantment has the status of a "universal" admonition to work with the text. On the other hand, enchantment, Felski indirectly shows, is closely linked to recognition and the revelation of the most intimate areas of our reading selves – an uncomfortable state of exposure to being hurt, a state that in academic work takes a conventionalized form.

I get the impression that enchantment is a utopian project, and at the same time constitutes a taboo in literary studies, fortified by the postulate of professionalism (and of neutrality toward the object of study), which is additionally intensified by the still-acute division between elite, niche culture (the poetry of Justyna Bargielska, Barbara Klicka, Marcin Ostrychacz) and mass culture (*Fifty Shades of Grey*, the novels of Elena Ferrante or Katarzyna Bonda). I would like to agree with Felski's assertion that "[l]iterary theorists err when they

[16]R. Felski, *Uses of Literature*, p. 51.
[17]Ibid., p. 64.

equate innovative form with mental states of knowing-ness, irony, and distance. Linguistic experiments can accentuate rather than block involvement, using the musicality and expressiveness of sound to trigger in-choate yet intense associations or sharpened auditory and sensory awareness"[18]: this is an experience I know well, and yet it is not compatible or comparable with the enchantment of a detective story plot or an absorbing story about enchantment told by a friend, in which I can observe narrative dissonances and obvious procedures of composition. It is not possible to detach one's po-etological knowledge, particularly poetological experi-ence in reading, and allow oneself to be enchanted by a magician lacking in skills. Talking about our admiration for neolinguistic poetry or for prose that is uncompro-mising in its directness or its social diagnoses has little in common with a confession of enchantment, nor will it capture the masses or convince them of the worth of professional studies, while professionals who rarely apologize for preferring Kicińska to Kalecińska simul-taneously stand up for experimental, niche literature in their interpretations and the topics they choose for their MA seminars.

A side effect of the institutionalization of enchantment with endangered genres is the intensification of the di-vide between what is elite and accessible to the few and what is popular and undemanding. Since there is no such thing as reading without evaluation, and an ex-pression of enchantment represents the highest pos-sible praise that a literary text can receive ("Enchant-ment is characterized by a state of intense involvement, a sense of being so entirely caught up in an aesthetic object that nothing else seems to matter"[19]), there is rarely pure, gratuitous rapture, and usually some other purpose at hand. For that reason as well, it is easier for literary scholars to recall the enchantment they experi-enced in childhood (that is Miller's narrative strategy). Childhood, uncontaminated by specialized reading, ap-pears as a reader's paradise, in which literature works effectively and faultlessly – a paradise from which we were driven after eating of the tree of knowledge.

Enchantment with a work (corresponding to infatuation with another person, a feeling similarly heavenly as child-hood) functions unerringly as a didactic or interpretative allurement only in the short term: it exhausts itself with the act of breaking the text down to work on it. When used as a literary figure for readerly confession, it in-voluntarily acquires an ironic resonance or initiates ten-sion between naïve enchantment and ironic distance, as in the case of the conversational essay "Dlaczego nie lubię książek" (Why I Do Not Like Books) by Kazimiera Iłłakowiczówna, who uses the Mickiewiczean topos of a tale of brigands to present her readerly biography and perversely argue that one ought not to read, that read-ing leads to perdition and disconnection from reality, before finally citing a few quotations from her own trans-lations and delighting in them with her listener/readers:

> upon being reminded of this ballad, while preparing this talk, and so in the process of translating the ballad itself, I gave in at once to that all-too-familiar toxic stupor that isolates one from real life. I imme-diately went off the rails of duty, and indifferently greeted someone I had not seen for years, which I now bitterly regret; I responded curtly and distrac-tedly to a long since longed-for favour and nearly forgot about a vote I was bound to take part in. Is that right? Is that fitting? So I very very strongly and with great emphasis warn you against books. The better the book, the easier for it to devour you. I do not like books. I avoid books!"[20]

The journey from enchantment to avoidance is short, leading through anecdote and play with convention (in Iłłakowiczówna's case this is a parody of Party-imposed self-criticism) to irony which is lined with the reflexivity of modernity and modern reading practices.

There is, notwithstanding, nothing bad about enchant-ment itself (aside from the fact that it is impermanent) and perhaps the evidence of literature's unflagging charms should be looked for elsewhere than in works of theory and literature: it is entirely possible that the

[18]Ibid., p. 83.
[19]Ibid., p. 54.

[20]K. Iłłakowiczówna, "Dlaczego nie lubię książek," in *Niewczesne wynurzenia* (Untimely Effusions), Warszawa 1958, p. 241.

strongest argument in favour of enchantment can be made by literary blogs, fora, social platforms, above all, perhaps, in fan fiction. This gray zone of literary production, based on the fan posture of captivation and zeal, represents a dynamic and active form of engagement with literature. Enchantment can than be understood as a preliminary condition for another use of literature – as fuel for one's own creative works. It would then fulfil Bayard's postulate of self-recognition in books, conversations about them, and then living a book: "this inaugural moment when [...] the reader, free at last from the weight of the words of others, may find the strength to invent his own text, and in that moment, he becomes a writer himself"[21] – in the culture of immersion and the web community, and thus the conditions that transfer the intimate experience of enchantment into the area of intersubjective activity.

Surprise Me

On the opposite shore from enchantment there lies the equally complex phenomenon of shock: a readerly (and cultural) experience which has its own temporal-spatial and cultural framing, which renders us passive in relation to corporeal sensations and lays bare our fears, obsessions, psychic defects – together with our moral convictions and sensitivities. Felski demonstrates that we should think about shock differently than in the framework developed by the modern avant-garde (whose centennial we are celebrating, so that it clearly has become part of our tradition) and, instead of examining the immediate, electrifying feeling relating to the holy terror elicited by a text that threatens our customs, opinions and beliefs, ponder the timeless shock of Greek tragedy or, by means of shock, perform a diagnosis of contemporary culture: "The desire to shock and be shocked acquires an unprecedented intensity and visibility in the fabric of modern life, displayed in the sensational thrills and spills of cinema and other popular entertainments as well as the calculated outrages of the avant-garde. To be modern, it seems, is to be addicted to surprise and speed, to jolts of adrenalin and temporal rupture: to be a shockaholic."[22] The shockaholism of Polish cul-

ture can be measured by the literary debates over the work of Rafał Wojaczek and Antoni Pawlak, the "menstrual" literature of Izabela Filipiak and Olga Tokarczuk, the prose of Dorota Masłowska, Bargielska's *Obsoletki*: the further we get away from concrete discussions, the weaker become such works' power to shock, which nonetheless does not diminish the genuine nature of readers' experiences to the contrary.

Felski asserts that "The literature of shock becomes truly disquieting not when it is shown to further social progress, but when it utterly fails to do so, when it slips through our frameworks of legitimation and resists our most heartfelt values. It is at that point that we are left floundering and speechless, casting about for words to make sense of our own response."[23] This conceptualization of shock explains perfectly why Greek tragedies, shocking stories based on myths about the violation of basic laws of culture, transgressing taboos against patricide, incest, infanticide and others, resonate with readers of many different epochs, but it does not explain the endless development of new forms of shockaholism itself, drawing on both "universal" sources from classical antiquity and the present moment. In such cases, alongside sensational stimuli there comes into play the whole weight of sociocultural beliefs, prejudices and the aesthetic doxa of a given moment: to admit to shock and describe its source means to analyze our immersion in the world. Perhaps the gesture of denying that anything can still shock represents only an expression of distance, detachment, indifference, and not satiety or boredom. Though there can be no doubt that the most agitated reactions are elicited in society not by literary texts but by visual presentations (the work of Katarzyna Kozyra and Dorota Nieznalska, Rodrigo Garcia's *Golgotha Picnic*, Oliver Frljić's *The Curse*, Agnieszka Holland's *Spoor*), these works, like literary texts that trigger shock, testify to conflicts and astigmatic desires as to the directions in which the "stimulation of social development" is supposed to flow. Likewise, texts of engaged literature that strike at feelings of harmony and order, such as they are, also shock and arouse contradictory reactions.

[21] P. Bayard, *How to Talk About Books You Haven't Read*, p. 180.
[22] R. Felski, *Uses of Literature*, p. 121.

[23] Ibid., p. 110.

Bargielska's *Obsoletki* is a shocking work because it uncompromisingly compiles and juxtaposes discourses of medicine, religion, law, psychotherapy and media relating to miscarriage and scenes of (extra)ordinary family and social life and morals whose shared point of reference is a sense of loss and mourning. The juggling of these different languages gives the narrator, a social activist and a mother, the nonchalant features of a juvenile narcissist, but above all elicits a sense of the grotesque. Justyna tells about her inner pain and despair while simultaneously distancing herself from the forms of reassurance and comfort that she offers to other women. Here, the frightening mixes with the amusing, the personal with the public, the private with the shared, the representable, everyday, colloquial with the inexpressible experience of a miscarriage, which functions outside of the rules of symbolic representation: "Nobody advances our cause, because we are not sure if photographs of dead foetuses are allowed by the constitution, and we don't know how to ask for such advancement. The only definition of a child in Polish law is the one in the law about children's rights advocates. Such an advocate protects the interests of the child from the moment of conception. That probably makes us even more embarrassed – that the law is on the side of our suffering. So we take pictures with a sense of guilt before progress."[24] A photoshopped image of a deformed, dead fetus generates a sense of shock for which it is quite impossible to prepare oneself. No matter which of the epithets that synthetically define contemporary culture we use – iconoclastic, hyperrealistic, pornographic – that culture does nothing to render us immune to such an image of the destruction of fetal matter, certain areas of life and experience remain inexpressible. An image that it would be impossible to reproduce if not for advances in medicine and technology is simultaneously not ideologically neutral, being tied to the controversy (and culture wars) over abortion. It jars our eyes, because "we have grown ever more sensitive to, and repulsed by, reminders of our mortality – disease, decay, suppurating wounds, rotting flesh, nauseating body odors and the like," Felski writes.[25] It shocks, because despair at the loss of a long-awaited child is so great that it is jarring as a photograph (here we see manifested the aggression, analyzed by Felski, of an artist oriented toward shocking her readers, but also the mechanism of hyperbole). What we see in the photograph (the "it," object of taboos) is narrated by Justyna, who has lived through losing a child in a miscarriage and is familiar with the sight of dead fetuses, and simultaneously conscious of the inadequacy of discourses, images, and signs. Her narration does not bring any feeling of catharsis or provide any solutions – schematae or metaphors – that lend themselves to telling about such an experience without eliciting shock. *Obsoletki* remains a shockingly anti-social work in its resistance to an intimate yet devastating experience for which there are no words, while it simultaneously reveals the fragility of all communal activities (including verbal communication). The grotesque metaconsciousness of Justyna, an "ordinary photographer," becomes detached from temporary and transitory languages and draws from what is ancient and tragic: she becomes Antigone, placing in opposition to power and public injunctions her intimate wound and private duty to bury and mourn the dead. Shock, grounded within tradition, is not voided: "leaving us hard-pressed to explain the continuing timeliness of texts, their potential ability to speak across centuries."[26]

Getting Better Acquainted

Because I never doubted for a moment that "one motive for reading is the hope of gaining a deeper sense of everyday experiences and the shape of social life. Literature's relationship to worldly knowledge is not only negative or adversarial; it can also expand, enlarge, or reorder our sense of how things are,"[27] I see the part of *Uses of Literature* concerning knowledge as a summary of the debates on modern discussions of mimesis whose apotheosis, for Felski, is Paul Ricoeur's *Time and Narrative* (translated into Polish a few years ago). Felski offers a synthetic (and, as a result, condensed) discussion of the most important and most frequent metaphors relating to the question of *mimesis*: appearances, mirrors, maps, the symptom; she treats theories

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[24]J. Bargielska, *Obsoletki*, Wołowiec 2010, p. 41.

[25]R. Felski, *Uses of Literature*, p. 124.

[26]Ibid., p. 120.

[27]R. Felski, *Uses of Literature*, p. 83

that reject all forms of referentiality as one-sided and in-consequential. Here we see Felski's pragmatism – both in the methodological perspective she adopts (the book focuses on the uses of literature, not a survey of the most important aesthetic and ontological concepts) and in her approach to argumentation. Only theories that are interpretatively productive, intersubjectively communicative and socially influential are of value to Felski, which is why she turns (after feminism and other socially conditioned theories) toward phenomenology. Felski rejects the suspicious stances of Marxists and deconstructionists, and makes an opposition between divagations into unknowability and a position of ethical engagement and responsibility.

Literature makes it possible to know the world via the same principles by which we learn the truth about ourselves – it broadens our perception, redefines meanings, opens us to new metaphors with which we can once again (and again) describe reality in its flickering, murky, complicated nature from the position of a limited but also multidimensional subject. At the same time, Felski discusses the cognitive values of three literary texts: *The House of Mirth* by Edith Warthon, *Cloudstreet* by Tim Winton, and the odes of Pablo Neruda.

A Polish analogue for the first of those works might be Zofia Nałkowska's *Romans Teresy Hennert* (Teresa Hennert's Romance), in view of the two authors' similar interests, their temporal contexts and the kind of particular reflection they engage in on the entanglement of the private and public spheres, or, to use Felski's terminology, the ontology and phenomenology of their literary worlds. Even the term "deep intersubjectivity," borrowed from George Butte, describing "this capturing of the intricate maze of perceptions, the changing patterns of opacities and transparencies, through which persons perceive and are perceived by others" [28] fits comfortably with the proposals of various interpreters of *Romans Teresy Hennert*, which provides a glimpse of, and simultaneously draws readers into, the workings of gossip, slander and secrets as elements in political, social and personal games played between per-

sons with contradictory aspirations and desires. From Nałkowska's novel, as from *The House of Mirth*, one can learn a great deal about the practices of life in society, in which no one is pure and innocent and the narrative is conveyed in such a way as to both be absorbing and to engender critical reflection on political and business relationships in Warsaw in the interwar period. "As a form of context-sensitive knowledge conveyed to readers, it [sensitivity to the smallest nuances of social interaction] is more akin to connaître than savoir, 'seeing as' rather than 'seeing that,' learning by habituation and acquaintance rather than by instruction." [29]

The ventriloquistic practices of Tim Winton, involving "imitating idioms, delving into dialects, echoing the tics and mannerisms of styles of speech," [30] which in fact is a mimetic practice of old and contemporary stylists (and can there be literature without stylization?), could be compared to the artistic solutions familiar to Polish readers from Szczepan Twardoch's *Drach* or Dorota Masłowska's *Wojna polsko-ruska*. Zofia Mitosek has shown the mimetic aspects of the latter, working with a conviction, based in the tradition of literary scholarship, that "stylistic skills form the meaning of a work, and knowledge in the novel is achieved through knowledge of the novelistic language." [31]. The "non-standard Polish usage" of the character and that appears in other works by Masłowska is, as Koziołek has demonstrated, "made from fragments of living speech, a variety of sociolects, but we never find it in its entirety outside of writing," [32] but precisely because we recognize the multiplicity of registers and can point to the everyday, the medial, the courtyard, and other "sources" of this language, we are able to appreciate its "miracle of the idioms." *Drach* is, compared to Masłowska, less idiomatic, but it upholds the tradition of bravura stylization manoeuvres and its Silesian dialect is as convincing as the language used by Edward Redliński or Ryszard Schubert. Both novels are examples of how "[h]eteroglossia [...] describes the moment when linguistic

[28] R. Felski, *Uses of Literature*, p. 91.

[29] Ibid., p. 93.

[30] Ibid.

[31] Z. Mitosek, *Poznanie (w) powieści. Od Balzaka do Masłowskiej* (Knowledge [in the] Novel. From Balzac to Masłowskiej), Kraków 2003, p. 332.

[32] R. Koziołek, *Dobrze się myśli literaturą*, p. 15.

distinctions match up with socio-ideological ones, when historical divisions are actualized and verbalized in unique configurations of lexis, grammar and style."[33]

Personally, I am less interested in "the description of things in themselves" (and the entire school that studies the history, ontology, phenomenology and emancipation of things) than a different cognitiely-oriented use of literature – those cases in which literature functions alongside history and journalism as documentation in social, political and anthropological diagnoses. Taken outside the framework of specialized academic and theory – or literature-centric reading, it then reveals its basic, paradoxical property of the capacity to build and undermine social ties and a community's shared myths. At that point, it often – through procedures typical of literature and alien to other discourses – reveals itself as "the most perfect example," illustration, and starting point in a discussion.

In *Prześniona rewolucja. Ćwiczenia z logiki historycznej*[34] (The Dreamt Revolution. Exercises in Historical Logic), Andrzej Leder diagnoses the Polish twentieth century using the methods of Lacanian psychoanalysis as a tool of inquiry into the unconscious processes, subject to repression and denial, that shaped successive generations. Literature and the literature of fact: the memoirs of Czesław Miłosz together with the reportages, quoted therein, of Zbigniew Uniłowski and Ksawery Pruszyński, *Pan Tadeusz,* but above all Gombrowicz's *Ferdydurke*, all play crucial roles in Leder's argumentation: "It was Gombrowicz who created the most powerful, dialectical image of the peasant's imaginative self-perception, an image that embodies the position that falls to the peasant in the symbolic universe of the 2nd Polish Second Republic. It is undoubtedly the most penetrating reconstruction, and simultaneously, deconstruction, of the phantasms that ruled the imagination of that Poland which grew out of a farming culture. This is why I devote a great deal of attention to that image and do not hold back from extensive quotations from that work."[35] We can describe the function of *Ferdydurke* in Leder's work using Felskian

language: it is not capable of replacing the diagnostic tools of Lacan and Marxist psychoanalysis, but neither are they capable of replacing it. It is simultaneously an example of how critical dialectical thought that can be grasped within the framework of post-Marxism operates (in this case using literature to explain the functioning of Polish culture; i.e. working with deconstruction, with theory) and an illustration of social relations in the interwar period (thus at the same time functioning as an example of historical argument, of reconstruction).

This is exactly the kind of use of literature that proves it to be irreplaceable for all attempts at analyzing "What does it all mean?" – attempts that have at their centre the symbolic, the social, the anthropological, and the fact that literary studies have not brought about the death of literature, since they represent only one of the many fields of knowledge that creatively use it. Literary theory "has manifest difficulty in acknowledging that literature may be valued for different, even incommensurable reasons. Instead, it remains enamored of the absolute, dazzled by the grand gesture, seeking the key to all the mythologies in the idea of alterity or sublimity, desire or defamiliarization, ethical enrichment or political transgression,"[36] writes Felski in the Conclusion to her book. She is right in the sense that theory is getting worn out, exhausted; every so often it needs a paradigm shift (and Felski's book is either a symptom or an omen of one), inasmuch as it appears to be unproductive and chasing its own tail; literature, on the contrary, is an inexhaustible discourse: "It's enough if it appears in someone's dream. / It's enough if somebody thinks about it."

[36]R. Felski, *Uses of Literature*, p. 148.

[33]R. Felski, *Uses of Literature*, p. 94.

[34]A. Leder, *Prześniona rewolucja. Ćwiczenia z logiki historycznej*, Warszawa 2014.

[35]Ibid., p. 101.

KEYWORDS

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ETHICAL TURN

everyday life

ENCHANTMENT

knowledge

neophenomenology

Abstract:

The article discusses arguments in favour of the importance (or irrelevance) of literature in social life and that appears with a psychological dimension in the work of J. H. Miller, Pierre Bayard, Michał Paweł Markowski, Ryszard Koziołek and, above all, Rita Felski (in her book *Uses of Literature*), dealing with the most important currents and trends in theoretical reflection on literature in the last quarter century. The author of the article finds the affective turn and the study of relations between life and literature within the context of the domination of discourse by other (new) media not based on writing to be a particularly important encounter in the re-evaluation of literature's meaning. The author's close and critical reading of Felski's *Uses of Literature* involves a) discussion of the theoretical inclinations and problems that generate individual aesthetic categories; b) application of the American scholar's proposed aesthetic categories to the interpretation of particular prose, poetic and essayistic works by Zofia Nałkowska, Inga Iwasiów, Justyna Bargielska, Dorota Masłowska, Szczepan Twardoch and Andrzej Leder.

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Barbara Kulesza-Gulczyńska

Reading Games, Playing Reading

c r i t i c s :
Piotr Kubiński, *Gry wideo. Zarys poetyki* (Video Games. Outline of Poetics), Kraków 2016.

The crucial role played by video games in contemporary culture is increasingly being noted by scholars of the phenomenon. Attention is being paid to the fact that aside from their obvious ludic and entertainment function, they also carry out other tasks and have a significant influence on other areas of contemporary art. The relative "youth" of the phenomenon (the first computer games designed for popular use appeared in the 1970s) and its rapid-fire development, closely linked with the development of new technologies, make it an extremely interesting, though difficult, object of study. Despite the fact that the state of affairs has changed radically in recent years due to the increasingly dynamic activity of scholars specializing in phenomena within the sphere of new media, scholars of video games still find themselves challenged to some extent by the need to justify the relevance and importance of a phenomenon from the domain of "low-brow entertainment," burdened with negative connotations (the problems of violence and addiction) in scholarly studies. Additional and perhaps more important difficulties in terms of methodology appear in the form of the rapid and ever-shifting development of technology (the working categories developed to describe games at the dawn of the twenty-first century frequently reveal themselves to be inadequate for describing the games now being created), as well as the need to elaborate appropriate tools and categories of description for a phenomenon that eludes, in terms of both concepts and content, the conceptual apparatus and theories used in previously existing fields.

An awareness of this problem was one of the foundations of game studies or ludology – their fundamental goal was to free the discourse of the study of games from the categories used to describe other phenomena and to develop a suitable methodological apparatus that would allow the specific nature of the phenomenon to be captured in categories exclusively proper to the new field. The dispute that arose between ludologists (proponents of seeking out new tools and scholarly categories for the description of games) and narratologists (who believed that games should be studied using traditional categories from the study of texts and narratives and that such a methodology was sufficient) has been described in detail in the literature on the subject.[1] In the introduction to his outline of the poetics of video games, however, Piotr Kubiński[2] underscores the facile, superficial nature of that dispute. Taking a broad scholarly perspective and

[1] See, for example: G. Frasca, "Ludology meets narratology. Similitude and differences between (video)games and narrative," http://www.ludology.org/articles/ludology.html, accessed: 28.01.2017; A. Surdyk, "Status naukowy ludologii. Przyczynek do dyskusji" (The Scholarly Status of Ludology. A Contribution to the Discussion), *Homo Ludens* 1/2009, pp. 223-243.

[2] Piotr Kubiński, *Gry wideo. Zarys poetyki*, Kraków 2016

an admittedly eclectic (in its methodology) and interdisciplinary approach, Kubiński in *Gry wideo. Zarys poetyki* (Video Games. Outline of Poetics) rightly asserts that the complexity and uniqueness of the phenomenon of video games demand the application of a variety of tools and solutions, depending on the aspect of the phenomenon on which we intend to concentrate our inquiry. The "poetics" of the title here should not suggest that the work limits itself to using only the traditional instruments of literary studies. Kubiński invokes the contemporary understanding of poetics as a tool appropriate to the study of various forms of textuality, simultaneously adopting a very broad understanding of text that allows him also to include within its scope categories not found within the area of interests of classical literary scholarship.

Here, it should be noted that in his analysis of various elements of the poetics of video games, Kubiński does a perfect balancing act, both accenting the kinship between the solutions applied in games and procedures used in other artistic fields (cinema, literature and painting), and revealing important differences that testify to the unique nature of the devices described. This equilibrium, such as his explicit use of a variety of theories from literary studies and other fields, combined with knowledge in the area of information technologies, enable him to perceive significant efforts aimed at constructing descriptive tools that will make possible a discussion of video games, already an important element of contemporary culture, as a phenomenon that is unique but also rooted in tradition and draws from it in a great many different ways. This emphasis on not only the ludic but also the artistic value of the games analyzed is also a crucial observation that situates the phenomenon at the centre of contemporary culture.

Kubiński begins his proposal for a scholarly tool for describing video games with a discussion of the phenomenon of immersion, which he, in accordance with many scholars, finds to be a constitutive element of the poetics of video games. Operationalizing some concepts used by scholars of such games and undertaking an attempt to settle some doubts as to terminology (differences between the concepts of telepresence, immersion and incorporation, as well as differences in definitions of immersion as such), Kubiński decides to define the phenomenon as "an expression of unmediated participation, direct presence in a digital space generated via computer."[3] He underscores the importance of the player's "possession" by works of an immersive nature: the fact that the world of the game absorbs the user, "tearing him away from" extradigital reality. Kubiński, sticking to his adopted strategy of balancing between the similar and the dissimilar, does not posit a strong thesis asserting that immersion is limited exclusively to the domain of video games. He cites remarks on the immersive properties of other fields of art and the impression of absorption, whether created by a literary text or a filmic work, at the same time searching for what might be treated as exclusive to video games in order to avoid blurring his concepts. To a considerable degree, this allows him to differentiate and discuss in detail the factors that shape the sense of immersion in the world of video games, among which are: the impression of unmediated experience, the illusion of direct participation in the game, ergodic elements, the kinetic dimension of the player's activity, and the reliability of the technologies used. A crucial point is Kubiński's observation that in the case of a video game, achieving the impression of immersion does not require an effort to convey an illusion of reality that corresponds to the original in a relationship of 1:1 equivalence, an effect which might increasingly be made possible by developments in technology. Textual games based strictly on an exchange of messages conveyed via an internet platform or the simplest hand-eye coordination games can have, in keeping with this reasoning, just as high an immersive potential as those that are visually and technologically elaborate, complex simulations of alternative worlds.

An element of his argument which Kubiński himself finds particularly important, and which from the perspective of a reader interested in the study of games seems to enrich the state of research on the topic to a significant degree is the reflection he undertakes in the chapter on the phenomenon of "emersion," understood by him as a phenomenon opposite to immersion, "snatching away" the user from the sense of immersion in an alternate reality and to some extent exposing the game's illusion-creating

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[3] P. Kubiński, *Gry wideo. Zarys poetyki*, Kraków 2016, p. 52.

aims. From the moment he introduces this category, all subsequently described phenomena become etched into different points on the field of tension between immersion and emersion, between the aspiration toward the deepest possible involvement of the user in the created world and his unconscious or, undoubtedly much more intriguing, conscious "dislocation" or "extraction."

It might seem that the emersive elements in a computer game would include primarily mistakes and lapses of a technical or systemic character, constituting technological limitations. Kubiński broadly discusses the problems relating to the façade created according to the needs of the game's design, which in certain circumstances can, accidentally, become apparent, deformations of characters or elements of the diegetic world not justified by the plot or, for example, the familiar situation in which a character walks into an "invisible wall," reaching the boundary of the map that represents the "end of the diegetic universe."[4] Kubiński describes phenomena of this type using the term technical disillusion, correctly noting that they can take the form not only of errors or technical imperfections, but also can serve to fulfil deliberate artistic purposes, which is considerably more interesting. He mentions the example of the game Batman. Arkham Asylum, in which an apparent mechanical error (the familiar lines on the screen accompanied by the corresponding sounds suggesting an equipment failure, and the apparent restarting of the game after a short while) in fact constitutes an element of the plot, illustrating the perception of the protagonist, who has been poisoned by toxins and is experiencing hallucinations. This effect unmistak-

ably elicits surprise and "extraction" from the rhythm of the game (particularly if the player fears that the progress through the game he has managed to achieve is going to be irretrievably lost due to a mechanical failure), thus bringing to mind (the similarity is noted by Kubiński) the effect of "making strange" (остранение), an idea introduced by Viktor Shklovsky and one of the key theoretical categories in Russian formalism. It opens a wide field for interpretation, even if it constitutes an element of the game's presentation which Kubiński himself treats as primarily popular and ludic in character. It has meta-medial potential – it is curious that the reaction of the hero's mind, subjected to the influence of toxins, resembles the reaction of a broken machine – this may suggest a certain level of cyborgization in the protagonist.

To describe other categories of emersive phenomena, Kubiński uses another category from literary studies, that of irony or rather ironic distance, invoking the concept developed by Zofia Mitosek. He sketches out a situation in which, within the story of a game, distance is created toward the text as such, an ironic display of its textual character, by means of reference to extratextual reality. Here Kubiński cites the example of the Polish game *Wiedźmin* (Warlock), in which references to popular songs (such as Stanisław Staszewski's "Celine"), the political situation (mentions of Poland's ruling Law and Justice party) and the history of philosophy (the names Søren Kiergegaard and Martin Heidegger), figuring as words in the elves' language without being removed from the course of the game's narrative action, cause a peculiar kind of "withdrawal" from the diegetic realm into the real world. Such references cannot be legible to the characters (though they are in fact spoken by their lips), but are to the player. As Kubiński observes, a singular transformation of the communicative model takes place here, as there appears a kind of sender who is not a character and whose consciousness approximates that of the player, enabling him to place in the mouths of the characters messages that elicit an effect of surprise or a humorous effect.[5]

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[4] We may be given pause in this case by the question of whether a similar emersive effect can be produced by for example a printing error or linguistic mistake perceived by a reader during the course of an absorbing reading (for context, Kubiński mentions mistakes in films, such as the visibility in a shot of objects not germane to the represented world but to the real one, e.g. a coffee mug or a wristwatch in a historical or fantasy film). Tension between immersion and emersion is here outlined in a very striking manner – the degree of immersion can be limited by the effective impact of emersive factors (when following the plot of a book, it is not difficult to overlook a punctuation error, and following mistakes in films often demands a tremendous degree of attention to and concentration on technical aspects rather than aspects of the plot) – while in the case of video games "overlooking" emersive elements is not always in fact possible – because sometimes they make it impossible to follow the plot or continue playing.

[5] Here we should recall that similar (though frequently much more sophisticated) procedures were used in the Wiedźmin books by the character's creator, Andrzej Sapkowski. There, too, references to a reality completely external to the represented world not only served as interesting literary allusions, often difficult to decipher, but likewise served to create "ironic distance."

Another technique for creating emersion that Kubiński identifies is "breaking the fourth wall" (his use of this term, which appears highly apt in context, shows yet again that in constructing his argument, Kubiński is constantly invoking traditional categories and tools, inscribing video games within a certain cultural-medial continuum). That is a situation where a game character turns directly to the player, for example to explain the rules of play to him or to elicit a humorous effect. Here again, a certain tension on the border between immersion and emersion is involved, which can be shown using the example (not mentioned by Kubiński) of games based on J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* book series. In these games, instructions for casting a spell are given by teachers during a lecture that the player must attend in order to finish that stage of the game (effect of immersion – we are plunged into the created world as pupils at Hogwart's). At the same time, however, those teachers, instead of instructing the player in how to operate the magic wand, as they did in the original book, here refer to how to use the tools the player has at his disposal (e.g. clicking on the mouse), an emersive effect, albeit one that seems, to a certain extent, camouflaged. Elsewhere on that borderline, we find situations where the user or player is addressed by means of a "wink of the eye," intended to have a comic effect or an effect of surprise, or simply to play with conventions (like the behavior of Deadpool in the game *Marvel vs. Capcom*, mentioned by Kubiński).

In his discussion of emersive effects, Kubiński also mentions devices in games that work with narration dynamics and the reliability of the narrator – the example he invokes is in the game *Call of Juarez: Gunslinger*; in a situation where the protagonist of the game is also its narrator, the user perceives that the narration affects the situation being presented – the narrator's utterances acquire a performative aspect, having a real effect on his position. The introduction of the category of the **unreliable narrator** here represents another bow toward classical literary theory and scholarship, but which also fits perfectly into the poetics of video games.

A highly significant concept introduced here which allows the specifics of the medium to be grasped while si-

multaneously taking traditional categories into consideration is that of the **palimpsest attempt**, Kubiński's term for a situation in which various plot trajectories become "superimposed" on each other, resulting from the possibility of recording the state of play (allowed by most complex adventure or platform games) and then playing through a certain stage once again. If the character dies in a clash with a more powerful opponent, the player activates the game again at the relevant level and, being aware of the approaching clash, is better prepared for it, changing the course of how the action develops. Operations of this type can also allow simultaneous exploration of multiple variants of the plot (at a moment when its development is influenced by certain decisions on the part of the player). This creates a unique narrative result, in which the course of the narrative arising "at the surface" is in a sense dependent on those record "underneath the surface," being simultaneously an emersive signal that brings into relief typical features of the medium, thus violating its "transparency" and impression of being unmediated.

After the exceptionally interesting chapter on emersion, Kubiński continues to use the tensions he has outlined at the line between immersion and emersion, describing types of graphic user interfaces that are used in computer games. He proposes his own type of classification for such interfaces, dividing them according to the criterion of the diegetic and spatiality, as well as the subcriteria of the diegetic aspect of communication, the contextual filter, and dynamic iconicity. In view of the vast extent of research material and ongoing technological development, it is difficult to state with full certainty whether this classification is exhaustive, but each of the categories listed is here illustrated with appropriate examples and described in a way that shows the operation utility of the division in question. The author divides interfaces into: superimpositions, metarepresentations, situational filters, spatial interfaces, diegetic messages, semeions and metainterfaces. At the same time, he shows that an interface as such will naturally be emersive in character, because it is a tool that enables human communication with a machine, providing information relating to the diegetic world, in many cases (especially where superimpositions are concerned) functioning as if somehow

"adjacent" to the reality of the game, while remaining closely connected with it. The emersion effect can for example be made smoother, primarily by metainterfaces – an extremely interesting phenomenon, pointing to multilayered metatextualrelations in video games. Metainterfaces are interfaces that function within the world of the game (i.e. tools that enable the protagonist to communicate with the device he is using, and simultaneously allowing the user to obtain information about the diegetic world). If the protagonist is a cyborg (an example used by Kubiński) who uses special lenses that provide him with information about objects in his sight (importantly, he acquires them only at a certain level of the game), this information is relayed to both the character and the user, becoming a kind of "multi-level" interface. This not only leads to a decrease in the effect of emersion but also has an aesthetic, artistic effect and offers enormous interpretative potential.

Kubiński also describes strategies used by game creators to reduce the emersivity of interfaces, such as minimalization (keeping the interface's elements to a minimum to achieve the lowest possible degree of hindrance to immersion), stylization (elements of the interface are stylized after parts of the game's represented world, though they do not constitute that world – an intriguing example of this is the stylization of the interface in the game *FIFA 15* to imitate a televised transmission of a football match – showing the complicated and multi-layered relations between the two media), diegeticization (incorporation of the interface into the diegetic world), configurativity (the possibility for the user to set the interface) and thematization (use of the interface as a significant element in the playing of the game).

The usefulness of the distinctions and classifications Kubiński makes seems to be proven by his minute analyses and interpretations of a great many cited examples. Kubiński surveys a variety of game genres (adventure games, "brawling" games, platform games, simulators, shooting games), directed at various audiences, and whose creators naturally have resorted to widely varied artistic solutions. The expanded exemplification, in addition to being an undeniably strong asset in proving the wide applicability of the proposed interpretations, allows

readers to become acquainted with many different phenomena from video game culture which they may not have encountered previously (this is particularly valuable given the overwhelming bulk of research material), but also constitutes a stimulus to submit games with which they are familiar to the proposed categories to "test out" their functionality.

In the final chapter, Kubiński presents some selected examples of the influence of the poetics of video games on other cultural texts and phenomena. Starting from an analysis of works of playable literature, he takes us through a short description of the phenomenon of gamification, to a detailed analysis of two examples of games from the genre of **engaged** games. The necessary limitation of the scope of analysis and description to certain perhaps particularly interesting (or in which the author is particularly expert) phenomena, to which Kubiński directly draws our attention, seems incredibly important here. Taking into account the minute exactitude of the analysis of particular examples and the intriguing conclusions, the reader feels a certain hunger for more after reading the book's last chapter; but the decision to delineate and open further areas of scholarly reflection in the area of video games seems a worthwhile move, to say the least.

For his examples of playable literature, Kubiński analyzes the works *Nokianor Parra* and *Laberinto Borgiano* by B. R. Moreno-Ortiz. The author's classical works of literature are here linked with some almost equally classical games of simple coordination: *Snake*, a game played on Nokia phones, and *Pac-man.* In the first case, the text develops together with the progress made in the game by the user (the snake eats pellets, as in the original game, building its body from the letters that create the work being presented); in the second, Pac-man eats the a's, while Borges's original work builds the walls of the labyrinth. An analysis of these playable works enables Kubiński to extract particular meanings etched in the collision of literary phenomena with games, and also their potential to produce specific artistic effects (here, following Kubiński, we should underscore that the way of reading and interpreting playable literary works diametrically contrasts with a traditional linear reading,

though it does not invalidate it, but rather introduces a certain astonishing variant form).

Further along, in his analysis of the problem of gamification, Kubiński describes the functioning of the popular e-learning platform Moodle, which uses a system of points and rankings in a program intended to facilitate the distribution of academic materials and support the learning process at the university level. The question of gamification is merely signalled here, however, a fact of which Kubiński is conscious, broadly citing the literature on the topic and encouraging further inquiries in that area.

On the other hand, Kubiński offers detailed analyses of chosen examples of engaged games, i.e. games in which the ludic function is, in some sense, subordinated to a journalistic or activist function. Submitting to reflection two simple internet games (*Raid Gaza!* and *Save Israel*) that have taken form in connection with the long-standing Israel-Palestine conflict in the Gaza Strip, Kubiński highlights the particular properties of games of this type which make it a significant instrument of social action. Irony, the constitutive feature in particular of the first game (Israel, as the side in the conflict embodied here by the user, has a considerable advantage based on the mechanics of the game, and in case of problems, can ask allies for financial aid, which makes the result of play practically a foregone conclusion), and potent messaging that results from it, as well as the games' wide availability (being distributed via the internet) and relatively low cost mean that we may expect engaged games to become to a still greater extent a relevant force in public discourse and a significant tool of social action. Such games are, however, also highly controversial (which in a sense heightens their potential ability to raise consciousness) – Kubiński does not touch here on the question of the risk of possible user failures to grasp irony or reach any level but the surface one (perhaps in the case of these examples, the irony is so explicit that the risk is quite marginal), which could distort the final message substantially.

An undeniable feather in the author's cap is earned, above all, by his skilful presentation of the dependencies between video games and other cultural phenomena,

while at the same time persuasively clarifying the areas that constitute their singularity. His free use of categories from various scholarly fields and theories does not elicit an impression of methodological inconsistency or eclecticism, but rather of conscious adaptation of his scholarly apparatus to the complexity of the material being explored. The wealth of examples Kubiński analyzes in depth here, which, crucially, are accompanied by abundant, detailed, and clearly annotated illustrations (mostly, but not only, screen shots of games), permitting readers not familiar with the phenomena being described to imagine them with greater ease, seems extremely important as well. A key category and definitely the most arresting element in the argument would appear to be emersion and its consequences for the poetics of video games, although his analyses of the problems of interfaces and signals in playable literature and advanced games represent a no less valuable contribution to scholarly research in this area. Kubiński's presentation puts forward a fascinating proposition for a conceptual apparatus and tools that can be used to describe and study video games, while at the same time allowing readers to become acquainted with many phenomena from this area of culture, to learn about its complexity and variety, and to perceive its potential not only in ludic, but also in artistic and journalistic terms.

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l u d o l o g y

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Abstract:

In his book *Gry wideo. Zarys poetyki* (Video Games. Outline of Poetics), Piotr Kubiński skilfully maintains a balance between comparing the singular phenomenon that video games represent to other forms of art while attempting to describe a new phenomenon using certain traditional categories, and underscoring their significant individuality and characteristic features. In searching for an adequate tool for studying the new phenomenon, the author analyzes multiple aspects of a variety of examples, examining such categories as immersion, emersion and the graphic interface of the user. He also raises the problem of connections between video games and other genres of art, doing so not only in the section dedicated to such comparisons, but throughout the book. His exemplification is aided by transparent and compelling illustrative material. The book appears to represent an important step forward in Polish studies of video games, particularly in view of the introduction and detailed discussion of the concept of emersion, but also due to the penetrating interpretations of specific artistic solutions and tropes.

i m m e r s i o n

POETICS OF VIDEO GAMES

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