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summer 17 2019

Interpoetics I

In interpoetics, a certain compositional, generic, or stylistic idea is transferred into a work that operates in accordance with different principles. (...) Since interpoetics involves transfer, one often needs to investigate how closely the two separate parts of a given poetical “adhesion” are integrated. We should also study when and why interpoetic coherence disintegrates, thus ending the movement “through” and “between” two parts, media, or ontologies. Perhaps at times this movement does not come to an end but gives rise to new artistic formations.

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Interpoetics

Tomasz Mizerkiewicz

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A decade ago, this issue of Forum of Poetics would probably have been titled simply “intertextual poetics.” However, the latest studies demonstrate that relations between texts can no longer be discussed in terms of broadly defined intertextual connections. Today, the question of how to determine the ontological status of a literary work is indeed a complex one – a given text can be textual, vocal, or otherwise “material;” it can be somewhat traditional or it can take the form of an algorithm, as is the case with electronic or digital literature. This alone means that the relationships which hold between broadly defined literary texts should be studied and interpreted in a new way – in the perspective of interpoetics.

Published in 2016, Bruno Currie’s Homer’s Allusive Art, an excerpt from which is included in this issue of Forum of Poetics, demonstrates that the Iliad includes references to other works in a manner similar to the model found in oral literature. In this respect, Homer’s epic emerges as a work created at the intersection of two different stages of literature, oral and written. It means that the connections between the Iliad and other works should be classified as not only intertextual but also, in some cases, interoral. Indeed, ingeniously understood interpoetics appears even in the oldest texts in the traditional European literary canon.

In interpoetics, a certain compositional, generic, or stylistic idea is transferred into a work that operates in accordance with different principles. On the one hand, some questions which relate to poetics, such as the question of coherence, should be posed anew. Indeed, certain structural integrals only become visible from a broader perspective when elements separated by interpoetic “cut” become a new “adhesion.” On the other hand, since interpoetics involves transfer, one often needs to investigate how closely the two separate parts of a given poetical “adhesion” are integrated. Respectively, we should also study when and why interpoetic coherence disintegrates, thus ending the movement “through” and “between” two parts, media, or ontologies. Perhaps at times this movement does not come to an end but gives rise to new artistic formations.

*Poetics is not only aware of its interpoetic traditions but it is also confronted with numerous transitions which are characteristic for various contemporary turns, breaks, unexpected connections, and unpredictable conceptual transfers. There are so many questions to be answered and so many ways to look at this phenomenon that we have decided to devote two issues of Forum of Poetics to interpoetics, focusing on its slightly different aspects. In this issue, we will focus on, among others, genetic criticism, as discussed by Jean Bellemin-Noël and Pierre-Marc de Biasi. Drawing on Bellemin-Noël and de Biasi, Adam Dziadek discusses the poetical relations between Aleksander Wat’s manuscripts and printed poems. Barbara Englender engages with an even broader spectrum of interpoetic problems. She discusses Tomasz Różycki’s poems in the innovative context of “photo-graphemicality,” exploring novel connections between photography and poetry. Izabela Sobczak analyzes the unusual relationship between the canon of modernist literature and Alison Bechdel’s famous comic book *Fun Home*, which, in turn, allows her to discuss the fascinating problem of materiality of intertextuality. In turn, Agnieszka Waligóra analyzes Andrzej Sosnowski’s poem, which may be read as a translation and an adaptation of Frank O’Hara’s text. Marcin Telicki tracks the development of a certain compositional concept, beginning with an Instagram post and ending with Anna Świrszczyńska’s poem. Finally, Piotr Gorliński-Kucik addresses the provocative visions of Jacek Dukaj, who in his last essay *Po piśmie* has announced the end of writing (and not just literature), discussing a new communication paradigm inspired by new media.*

The final example proves that renowned contemporary artists are very much interested in broadly defined interpoetic phenomena, which, at the same time, provide us with a new perspective on the entire history of written literature. Perhaps we are not witnessing the end of written literature, as Dukaj would have it, but it is thanks to interpoetics that literature opens up and develops in a new way.

translated by Małgorzata Olsza

Avant-texts and Intertextual Relations (In the Context of Genetic Criticism)*

* The present paper is a part of work in progress – a book on genetic criticism entitled *Semiografia rękopisu*.

Adam Dziadek

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A few years ago, while I was working at the Beinecke Library on materials which were to become a part of Aleksander Wat's archive, I came across galleys of the book of poems *Ciemne światło*, prepared by the poet. The collection of galleys included many comments by the author regarding the layout of each text, fonts, both minor and (sometimes) significant corrections to individual words, as well as long text excerpts. One poem, *Na spacerze*, especially attracted my attention. Although in the galleys it was dedicated to Zbigniew Herbert, the dedication was removed from the final, 1968 version of the poem. I was wondering why this had happened, especially since the dedication in question introduced a significant intertextual relation: I believe that *Na spacerze* related directly to two poems by Herbert, *U wrót doliny*, first published in the book of poems *Hermes, pies i gwiazda* (1957) and *Sprawozdanie z raju*,

first published in the book of poems *Wiersze* (London, 1964). The dedication to Herbert may have resulted from other reasons, such as friendly relations between the Wats and the Herberts – confirmed by the correspondence between the two families – or simply from mutual admiration for their poetic work. However, the relationships between the two texts suggest that the dedication resulted from the profoundly shared thoughts of both poets, who elaborated on biblical myths in a highly atypical, original way. The biblical protagonists of the poem *Na spacerze* go to Eden, which in fact is a labor camp; signposts in *U wrót doliny* lead to the unloading ramp in a concentration camp; in the dystopian vision of *Sprawozdanie z raju*, Eden is presented as a totalitarian state. Those poems by Wat would hence be a “hidden intertext” of *Na spacerze*, which allows for yet another possible way to read Herbert’s poem. It is worthwhile to take a closer look at this relation, which seems very interesting in the light of the elements of the pre-text.

Indicating these “hidden intertexts” is not the only goal here; I would also like to discuss intertextual relations in the context of genetic criticism, to highlight the importance of avant-texts in the shaping of intertextual relations, to treat avant-texts as a gate to the broad field of interpoetics, which can also include research into manuscripts or avant-texts, significant for later interpretations of selected texts, and which changes the perspectives of reading. Archival collections offer many interesting examples allowing for such a broad extension of intertextual fields of studied texts. In the case of the avant-text of *Na spacerze*, it is possible to identify more reference fields which expand the sphere of intertextual relations. Wat’s poems are only one example of the issue in question, which could be easily expanded to the works of other authors. The identification of avant-texts belongs to the researcher; an avant-text is never ready, it is listed in archives, stored in a specifically-designated place and waiting for being used and further developed. Creating an avant-text based on various, scattered archival materials is the task of researchers.

Today, an “avant-text” can be understood in several different ways. In this paper, its meaning is related to the concept of Jean Bellemin-Noël as enunciated in *Le Texte et l'avant-texte*, devoted to the galleys of one poem by Oskar Miłosz¹. Bellemin-Noël interprets its meaning in the following way: “a collection of notebooks, manuscripts, >>variants<<, understood as everything that physically precedes the poem treated as a text, and that can co-create a system with it”². Thus, the work on Wat’s archival materials approaches genetic criticism and is related to the analysis and reconstruction of the writing process; in this case, it is about various materials, in which the process of shaping the texts reveals itself. Hence, if we treat those

¹ Jean Bellemin-Noël, *Le texte et l'avant-texte: Les brouillons d'un poème de Miłosz*. (Paris: Libr. Larousse, 1972).

² Bellemin-Noël, 15. [translation mine, PZ].

scattered documents from Wat's archives as "avant-texts", then according to the principles of Bellemín-Noël's concepts, they should be read and interpreted only together with the text to which they refer.

According to Pierre-Marc de Biasi, an "avant-text" can be understood in the context of "manuscript genetics". Genesis documents (genesis *dossier*) comprise "a material collection of testaments and manuscripts referring to the writing process of the work which we intend to study"³. As de Biasi shows, the catalogue of "genesis documents" can be broad, including all the materials related to the creation of a given text, from archival materials to materials including "external information in relation to the text's genesis"⁴ (such as borrowed books, the author's correspondence and his/her library, etc.). Genesis *dossier* brushes aside manuscripts of a vague status, and introduces avant-text created by the researcher according to the principles of the scientific method; it comprises a collection of documents organized chronologically, from "plans, sketches, rough drafts, drafts, documentation, the final draft"⁵. According to de Biasi, an avant-text is significantly different from "studies into genesis", as it is "a collection of documents regarding the genesis of the work which can be interpreted, whereas the study of textual genesis is a scientific discourse, in which the geneticist interprets and evaluates the writing processes using specialized tools: poetics, sociology, psychoanalysis, etc."⁶ Therefore, an avant-text requires an organized, systematized shape – this is the researcher's task, since the materials comprising genesis *dossier* are never organized by authors and they never occur in such a shape as to be readily available for analysis. The same situation applies in the case of *Aleksander Wat's Papers* – those materials had been collected by the author's wife (assisted by Alina Kowalczykowska – there is a lot of evidence of her work in Wat's American archive) before donating them to the Beinecke Library, sorted into boxes and catalogued years after being donated (first the correspondence, and the remaining materials only after 2010)⁷. However, the fact that these materials are catalogued does not mean that Wat's archive in Beinecke offers complete avant-texts, readily available for analysis; the researcher is obviously forced to use materials located in different places of the collection.

³ Pierre-Marc de Biasi, *Genetyka tekstów*, trans. Maria Prussak and Filip Kwiatek (Warszawa: Instytut Badań Literackich PAN, 2015), 52.[translation mine, PZ].

⁴ Biasi, *Genetyka tekstów*.

⁵ Biasi, 53.

⁶ Biasi, 54.

⁷ Ryszard Zajączkowski wrote about it in Ryszard Zajączkowski, "W archiwum Aleksandra Wata," *Pamiętnik Literacki*, no. 1 (2007): 145–61; see also: Adam Dziadek, "Aleksander Wat w Beinecke Library w Yale," *Teksty Drugie*, no. 6 (2009): 251–58.

Situating the concept of “avant-text” in the context of intertextual studies has already been done, for instance, in the excellent thematic-bibliographic research paper on the intertextuality phenomenon published years ago in the Canadian journal *Texte*⁸. The paper included the concept of avant-text interpreted in the same way as in the already quoted book by Jean Bellemin-Noël. In the context of developing genetic criticism, this field of interest finally requires development, which is another goal of the present paper.

I will not dwell too much on the concept of intertextuality; even for its creator, it has become – in her own words – a “gadget” at some point of its dynamic development and incredible career in literary studies: “My concept of dialogism, ambivalence or what I called >>intertextuality<<, which I owe to both Bachtin and Freud, were to become gadgets discovered now at American universities.”⁹ Indeed, intertextual studies have incredibly expanded over a short period of time. Intertextuality, a term defined by Kristeva in 1966, fell on especially fertile ground – soon new variants and prefix varieties started to function (such as divisions into “transtextuality”, “hypertextuality”, “hypotextuality”, “metatextuality”, etc. proposed by Gérard Genette¹⁰), as well as specified forms (such as “autarkic intertextuality” by Lucien Dällenbach¹¹, or “obligatory intertextuality” and “aleatoric intertextuality” by Michaela Riffaterre¹²), and eventually, as if in an uncontrollable rush of terminological productivity, a proposal to replace “intertextuality” with “heterotextuality”¹³ was put forward. Over the more than thirty years of its existence, the term, coined towards the end of French structuralism, has been absorbed by almost every dominant trend in literature studies, structuralism, semiotics, hermeneutics, and phenomenology (Hans Robert Jauss, Brian T. Fitch), psychoanalysis (e.g. Jean Bellemin-Noël, Harold Bloom, Shoshana Felman), historical-literary,

⁸ *Texte Revue de Critique et de Théorie Littéraire.*, no. 2 (1983). This thematic issue of the Canadian journal *Texte* entitled *L'intertextualité, intertexte, autotexte, intratexte* offers an incredibly rich, detailed bibliography of works belonging to several different research fields – all devoted to the question of intertextuality.

⁹ Julia Kristeva, “Mémoire,” *L'Infini (Périodique)*, no. 1 (1983): 44. The history of the concepts has been analyzed, among others, by Renate Lachmann – see Renate Lachmann, “Płaszczyzny pojęcia intertekstualności,” trans. Małgorzata Łukasiewicz, *Pamiętnik Literacki* 82, no. 4 (1991): 209–15. I wrote about it more extensively in Adam Dziadek, “Stereotypy intertekstualności,” in *Stereotypy w literaturze: (i tuż obok)*, ed. Włodzimierz Bolecki and Grzegorz Gazda (Warszawa: Instytut Badań Literackich PAN, 2003), 67–82.

¹⁰ Gérard Genette, *Palimpsestes: la littérature au second degré*. (Paris: Éd. du Seuil, 1982). Excerpts in Polish: Gérard Genette, “Palimpsesty. Literatura drugiego stopnia,” in *Współczesna teoria badań literackich za granicą: antologia. T. 4 cz. 2*, ed. Henryk Markiewicz, trans. Aleksander Milecki (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1992), 317–366.

¹¹ Lucien Dällenbach, “Intertexte et autotexte,” *Poétique*, no. 27 (1976): 282–96.

¹² Michael Riffaterre, “La trace de l'intertexte,” *La Pensée*, no. 215 (1980): 4–18.

¹³ See Per Aage Brandt, “La Pensée du texte (de la littéralité de la littéralité),” in *Essais de la théorie du texte*, ed. D'Arco Silvio Avalle et al. (Paris: Éditions Galilée, 1973), 184–215.

socioliterary, as well as cultural studies. While observing the expansion of the term and its various transformations, the following comment can be made: intertextuality has become a term that is both necessary and fashionable, and as such is over-exploited, falling into stereotypical conceptualizations, which consequently has led to the loss of its significance in humanities discourse. This is also evidenced by the fact that in the late 90s, the number of publications adopting intertextuality as their methodological basis significantly decreased. The term itself entered literary criticism discourse and became a genuine gadget serving only ornamental functions.

The term enjoyed a great deal of interest among literature theoreticians in Poland in the 80s and 90s of the 20th century, which gradually faded away¹⁴. I understand and use this term in the same way as defined years ago by Julia Kristeva¹⁵ – it comprises any conscious, deliberate, as well as unconscious (which I would like to highlight, as sometimes it is wrongly reduced to teleological relations) references to other texts; it is a processual phenomenon, which relies on both conscious and unconscious devices, which is closely associated with subject relations of writing and/or reading.

Studies that take into consideration avant-texts can significantly expand the field of intertextual relations, allowing for discovering “hidden intertexts” or “traces of intertext”, which are very important for the final version of possible interpretations of a given text. Whenever possible, avant-texts should not be overlooked in studies into particular works. A careful examination of avant-texts also brings to mind considerations regarding possible

¹⁴I list only several selected publications here, most important from the Polish perspective: Michał Głowiński, “O Intertekstualności,” *Pamiętnik Literacki*, no. 4 (1986); (Henryk Markiewicz and Janusz Sławiński, eds., *Nowe problemy metodologiczne literaturoznawstwa* [Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1992], 185–212). A selection of translated texts on intertextuality: “Pamiętnik Literacki” 1988, vol. 1 and “Pamiętnik Literacki” 1991, vol. 4 (especially papers by M. Pfister and R. Lachmann); Henryk Markiewicz, “Odmiany intertekstualności,” in *Literaturoznawstwo i jego sąsiedztwa* (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawn. Nauk., 1989), 198–228; Krzysztof Kłosiński, *Mimesis w chłopskich powieściach Orzeszkowej* (Katowice: Wyd. Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, 1990); Jerzy Ziomek, Janusz Sławiński, and Włodzimierz Bolecki, eds., *Między tekstami: intertekstualność jako problem poetyki historycznej* (Warszawa: Wydawn. Nauk. PWN, 1992); Ryszard Nycz, “Intertekstualność i jej zakresy: teksty, gatunki, światy,” *Pamiętnik Literacki : czasopismo kwartalne poświęcone historii i krytyce literatury polskiej*, no. Tom 81, Numer 2 (1990); (Ryszard Nycz, *Tekstowy świat: poststrukturalizm a wiedza o literaturze* [Warszawa: Wydawnictwo IBL, 1995], 59–82); Stanisław Balbus, *Między stylami* (Kraków: Universitas, 1993); Teresa Cieślukowska, *W kręgu genologii, intertekstualności, teorii sugestii* (Warszawa: Wydawn. Naukowe PWN, 1995).

¹⁵Julia Kristeva, “Le mot, le dialogue et le roman,” in *Séméiotikè: recherches pour une sémanalyse* (Paris: Seuil, 1969), 143–73. The latest translation of this text into Polish: Julia Kristeva, “Słowo, dialog i powieść,” in *Séméiotikè: studia z zakresu semanalizy*, trans. Tomasz Stróżyński (Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo Słowo/Obraz Terytoria, 2017), 59–83. Previously the text was translated by Wincenty Grajewski and published in: Edward Kasperski and Eugeniusz Czaplewicz, eds., *Bachtin: Dialog, Język, Literatura* (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1983).

ways of editing and reading literary legacies. Digital technology and online publications make it possible for an edition to incorporate all the documents that comprise the avant-text. Thus, the work of reading does not end with the published text only, about which the author themselves made final decisions. Moreover, as shown by archival materials from Beinecke, texts published earlier are still subject to changes and modifications. Wat did not finish working on texts which had already been published; he transformed to a greater or lesser extent texts which he had published many years before in the Parisian *Culture* or London *News*, as well as in an earlier book of poems *Wiersze* (1957). Likewise, he continued to work on *Wiersze śródziemnomorskie*, and excerpts from *JA z jednej strony i JA z drugiej strony mego mopożelaznego piecyka*. The practice can also be observed in other authors, such as Tadeusz Różewicz. However, this applies only to poems which had already been published, excluding the new poem, *Na spacerze*, which was supposed to be added to *Ciemne świedło*. Avant-texts cannot be reduced to conscious, deliberate intertextual devices. Research into Wat's archive allow us to make avant-texts the basis for psychoanalytical interpretation. In one of Wat's notebooks, we can read about a dream he had during the night from February 24th to 25th 1961, which would later become the basis for the third installment of *Sny sponad Morza Śródziemnego*, which shows that at least some parts of the poem were inspired by dreams and thus were dictated by the unconscious¹⁶. And although writing down a dream renders it partially-deformed, the text is prompted by unconsciousness, like in the theater – at least some elements of the text emerge from the unconscious. This record of a dream is one of the most important interpretative contexts of the poem in question, as well as many later poems. Their reading cannot be fully detached from their avant-texts included in Wat's notebooks.

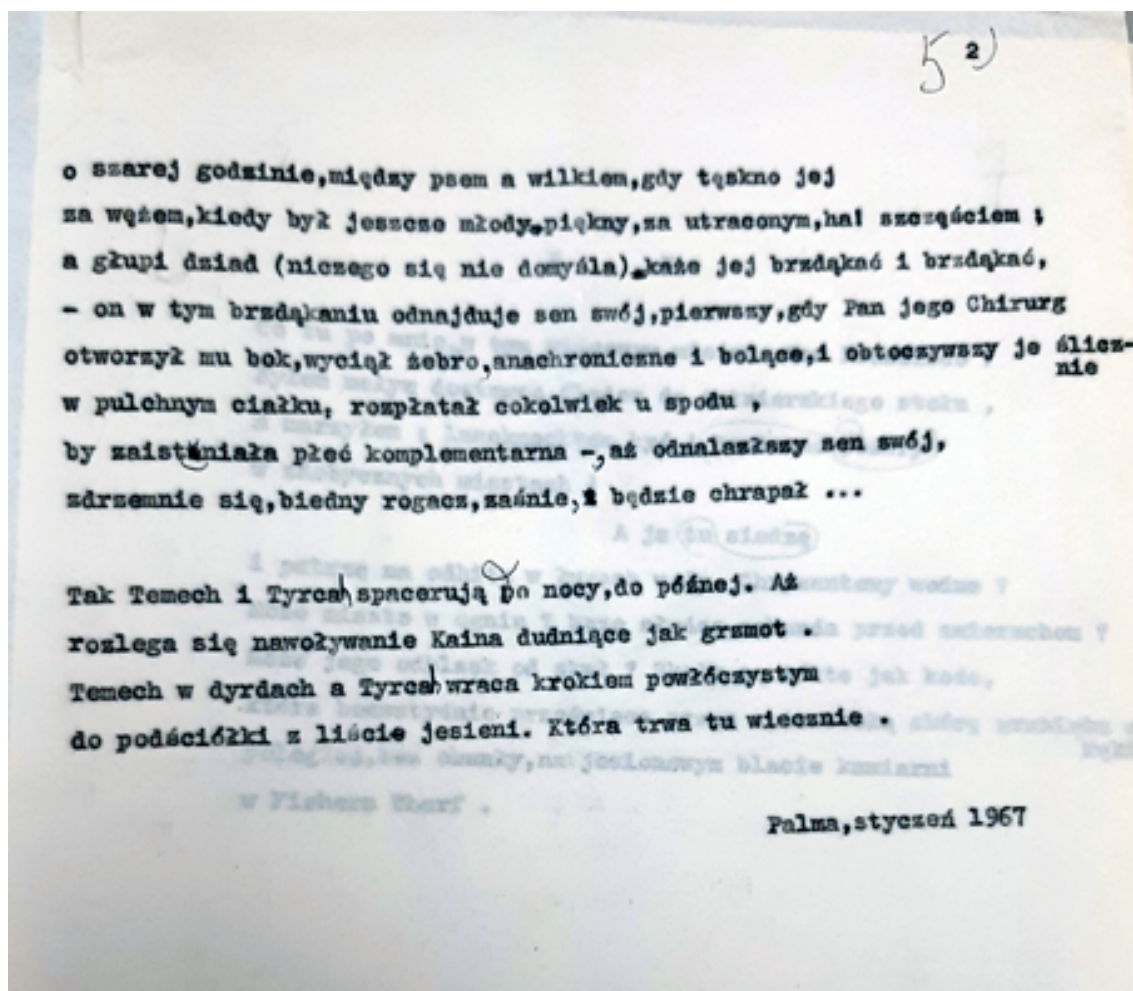
Sorting out the materials comprising the avant-text of the poem *Na spacerze* is a rather easy task. Below a typescript of the poem can be seen, copied from a manuscript (the poet did the work himself or his wife did it)¹⁷:

¹⁶See Aleksander Wat, *Notatniki*, ed. Adam Dziadek and Jan Zieliński (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo IBL, 2015), 680–81; see also Adam Dziadek, "Przed-teksty w „Notatnikach” Aleksandra Wata," in *Archiwa i bruliony pisarzy odkrywanie*, ed. Maria Prussak (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo IBL, 2017), 123–55.

¹⁷All the materials presented in this text come from the collection houses at the Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Yale University, Aleksander Wat Papers, GEN MSS 705, Series II Writings. Reference to the exact location in the collection is given next to each document. The documents are published with the permission of Andrzej Wat's copyright holders and his son, Pierre Wat.

NA SPACERZE

Temech, Kaina żona, i Tyrca, wdowa po Abelu, ^{szczęśliwa jej}
 przechadzały się brzegiem Edenu, po tej stronie kołczastego muru.
 Z miradorów uskrzydleni żołdaci ostrzegali a wesoło, ^{pod i brzością,}
 filuternie: ^{uwaga!} „Billion makro_volt!.. Pewno przesadzają...
 Osty tu ledwie się lęgną. Opodal na ^{górach} kosodrzewina. ^{wystrasz je słowem}
 Ziemia jak próchno. Od stu dni bez deszczu. Ale,
 w jednym kącie kolonia ropuchów miewa się dobrze, ^{niezły}
 także osada ropuch. Źródło tam ciurka ^{do chrząpek ...}
 z wód podziemnych rzeki Piszon. W której to rzece,
 jak wiadomo z Pisma Świętego (Genesis 2,11), złota jest
 jak maku. I czyste jak złoto. Dobywają młodzi
 synowie Kaina, pod strażą, od brzasku do nocy.
 Praca nieciężka. I opłacalna. I powietrze tam rześkie,
 bardzo zdrowe.
 Do tegoż źródła przekradają się z Edenu szczury.
 Oraz krety. Dla odmiany klimatu? nastroju? ^{Wiosna, wiosna 1967} Bo ja wiem czemu.
 Temech i Tyrca tyle mają sobie do powiedzenia! O zaletach
 seksów respektywnych małżonków. O tamtej awanturze.
 I Kto był jej instygatorem? Przecie się kochali, bracia.
 Jak łatwo się mówi: awantura. Dla jednej - wieczny wytrysk krez!,
 misterium wdowieństwa. Dla drugiej - temat do nieustającej
 adoracji męża-oracza o turzym karku.
 Gdy Temech bredzi o muskułach (a ślinka pryska z kącików ust),
 Tyrca myśli: „Chłop-ryfa... Mój za to był delikatnoskóry.
 Cienkonogi! Łowca. Śmiglejszy od każdego jelenia. I cięciwa jego
 dźwięczała jak złota struna lułni. Na której to lułni macierz Ewa brzdąka



Box 11 Folder 359: As can be seen, this version does not yet include the dedication. The very practice of copying poems from manuscripts is typical of Wat, who wrote his poems down in various notebooks from which he would later tear individual pages. He would also write poetry on random pieces of paper, or even dust covers, as was the case of the following short poem *** *Dla wiersza mego...* from the cycle *Z naszeptów magnetofonowych* (*Dla wiersza mego kim jestem? / Tym, kto śni mu się / natrętny. / Gdy otwiera oczy: stoję u węzłowa, / uzurpator z nożem ofiarnika, / z którego pocieknie wolno / wystygła krew atramentu.*)¹⁸:

¹⁸Who am I for my poem? / The one of whom it dreams / bothersome / When I open my eyes I am standing at the headboard / an usurper with devotion's knife / out of whom will slowly leak / cool blood of ink [translation mine, PZ]

Dla niego
potem ten, kto mu się imię
nazwał.
~~Wtedy~~
~~zaczyna~~
zaczyna
zimny wiewiator
z nacem, z którego powstał
celnik. Kto a trumfity.
ponad

Dla pierwsza część system?
Tym, kto ma się mi
należnie.
A gdy ~~ostateczny~~
(w)złącia (fojs)
żirany wzurpator
(z nozem), z którego
cieknie powoli fiolet atramentu.

[illegible]

Le top des a

JOÉ BOUSQUET
Lettres à Poisson d'Or

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Il faut noter de même l'inspiration d'un autre grand roman d'Henry de La Motte, *Le Capitaine Corcoran*, paru en 1904, qui est une œuvre de fiction, mais qui a été inspirée par les faits réels de la vie de Corcoran.

14,60 F (+ t.l.)
15 F T. L.I.

Box 22 Folder 464: In another case, as shown in an excellent paper on textual materiality by Mateusz Antoniuk¹⁹, Wat wrote down a poem on a medicine pack. The collections from *Aleksander Wat Papers* at the Beinecke Library offer many such discoveries, sometimes completely surprising documents, which can be arranged into Wat's avant-texts. Wat's manuscripts (as well as many other authors', such as Czesław Miłosz or Zbigniew Herbert) are often characterized by high complexity, which could be generally described as "semiography", or more specifically, "manuscript semiography", which goes beyond the scope of this paper (what I mean is, among other things, the fact that when a text that is written down and created, it is accompanied by not only deletions, corrections, modifications, but also drawings and sketches which enter into an inseparable relationship with the text; manuscripts by Czesław Miłosz especially stand out here – a lot of them contain characteristic symmetrical figures, which often take the shape of flowers²⁰).

There is no dedication, but there are a few corrections which will be repeated in the later versions of the text, and finally incorporated into its final version. We have information on the following poem recorded as a numeral, which was supposed to be added to the book of poems *Ciemne świeciddło* (the page numbers of this poem are written in smaller numerals). We can also see a very interesting note by Wat (upper left corner of the page), which introduces another intertextual relation – *Phèdre* by Racine becomes an important intertext of the poem. Wat writes: »początek trzeba wytłuszczyć wyrecytować / żeby "La fille de Minos et de Pasiphaé"«²¹. This quote indicates *Phèdre* by Racine (Act 1, Scene 1), and especially an excerpt from Hipolit: "Cet heureux temps n'est plus. Tout a changé de face / Depuis que sur ces bord les dieux ont envoyé / La fille de Minos et de Pasiphaé." (Glad times are no more / All's changed since the day / That, to our shores, the gods dispatched / the daughter Of Minos King of Crete: Pasiphae her mother"²²). The note on the page was supposed to evoke the sound structure of the French text, one phrase from it, which triggered an intertextual relation, took over someone else's text and someone else's thought, which was to be expanded here. Eventually "boldface" did not appear in the final version; however, its incorporation into one of the avant-text's elements opens other interpretation possibilities, significantly expanding the reference spectrum. Without this piece of information, we would not associate Wat's text with *Phèdre*, since there are no indications that we should.

¹⁹Mateusz Antoniuk, "Jak czytać stronę brulionu: krytyka genetyczna i materialność tekstu," *Wielogłos*, no. 1 (2017): 39–66. For me, it is a model text illustrating genetic criticism in practice, in which the avant-text of one of the poems by Aleksander Wat was carefully recreated, with attention to maintaining the chronological order of creating and copying different versions of the text.

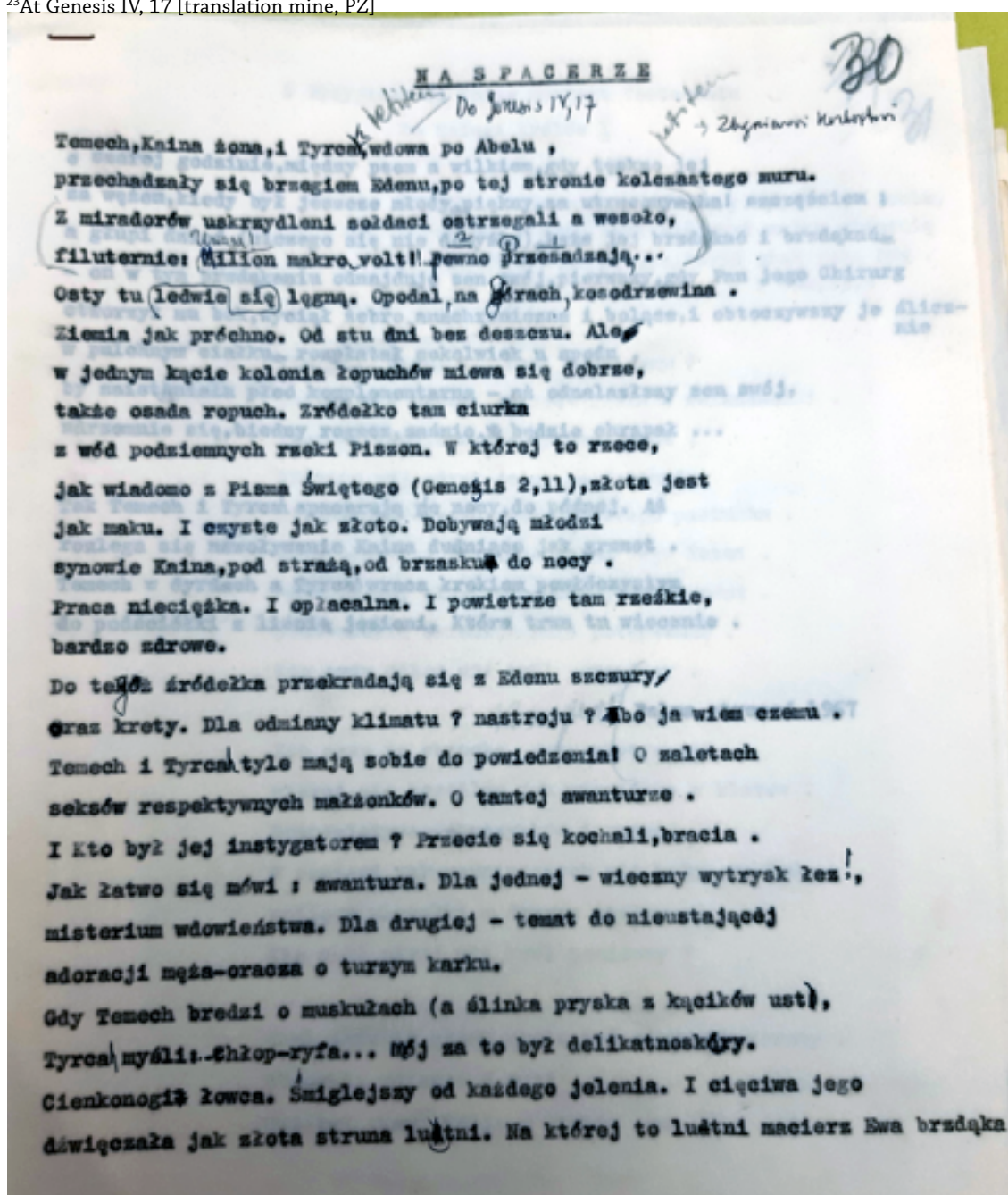
²⁰See Mateusz Antoniuk, *Słowo raz obudzone. Poezja Czesława Miłosza: próby czytania* (Kraków: Księgarnia Akademicka, 2015).

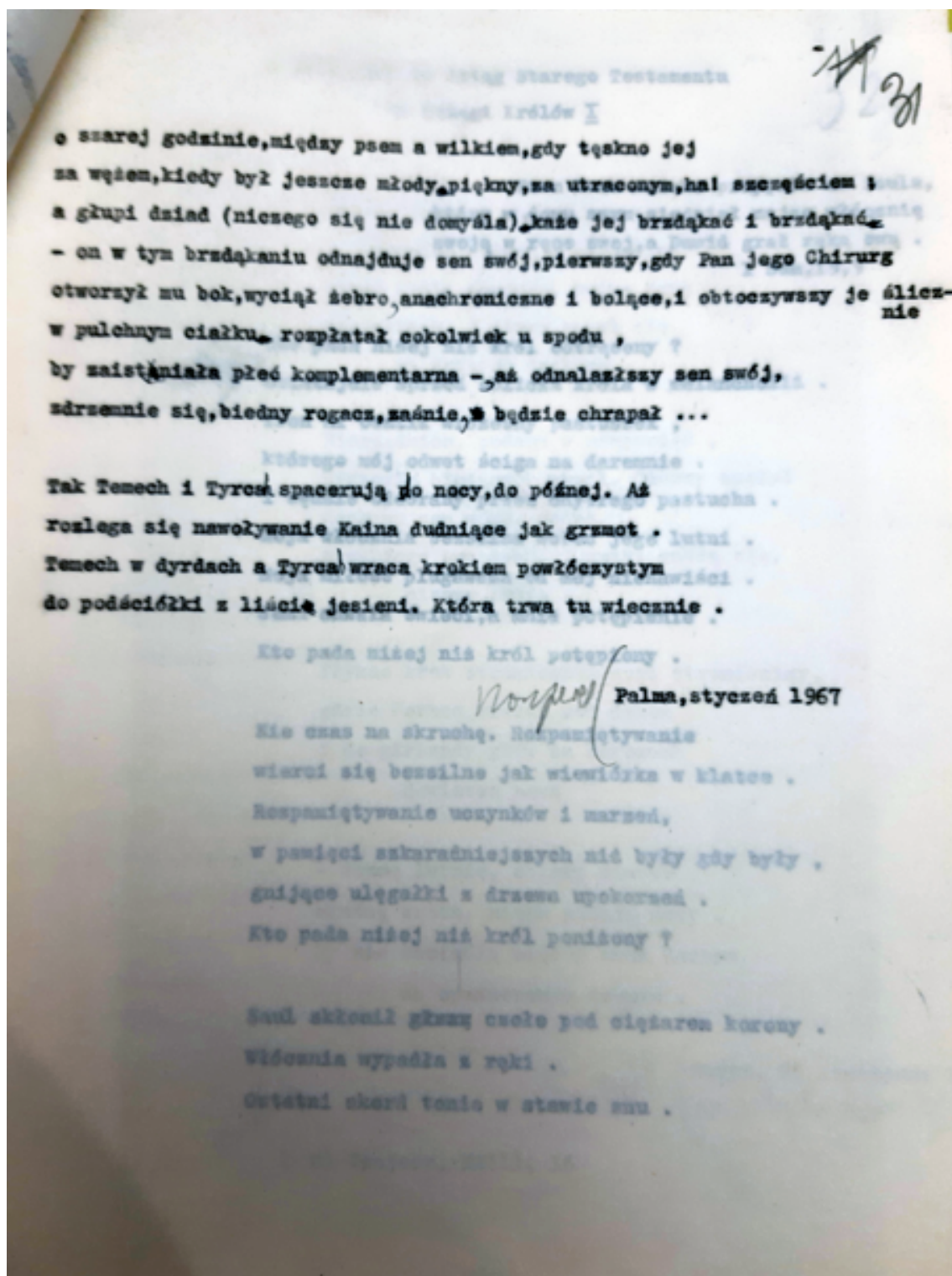
²¹»The beginning should be in bold, recited / so that "La fille de Minos et de Pasiphaé"« [translation mine, PZ]

²²Jean Racine, *Phèdre*, trans. Richard Parish (London: Bristol Classical Press, 1996).

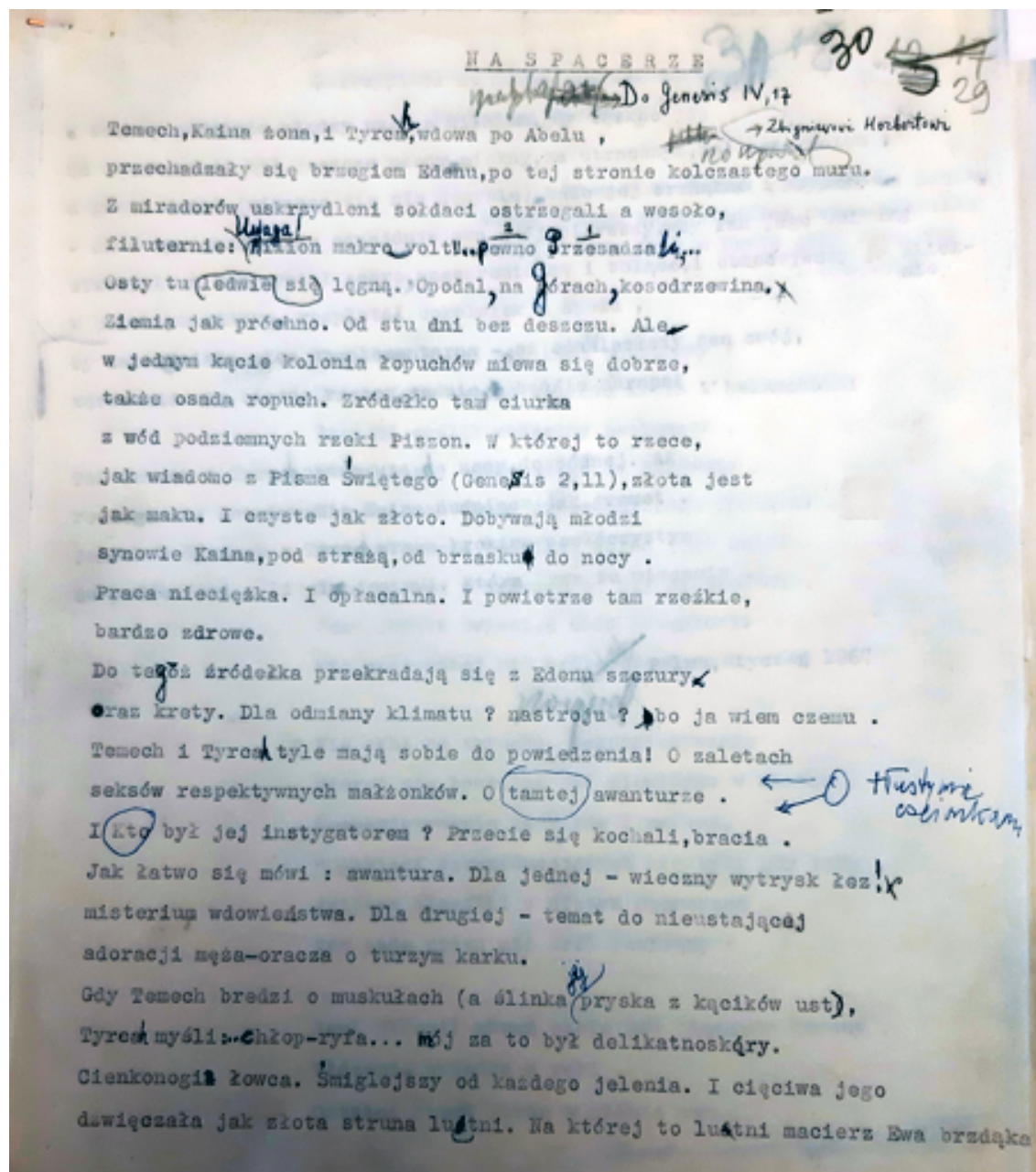
In the following version, devised on the basis of the same typescript, the dedication to Zbigniew Herbert appears. Above the dedication we can also see the following note: "Do Genesis IV, 17"²³, which eventually did not appear in the final version either. You can see the page with the dedication below:

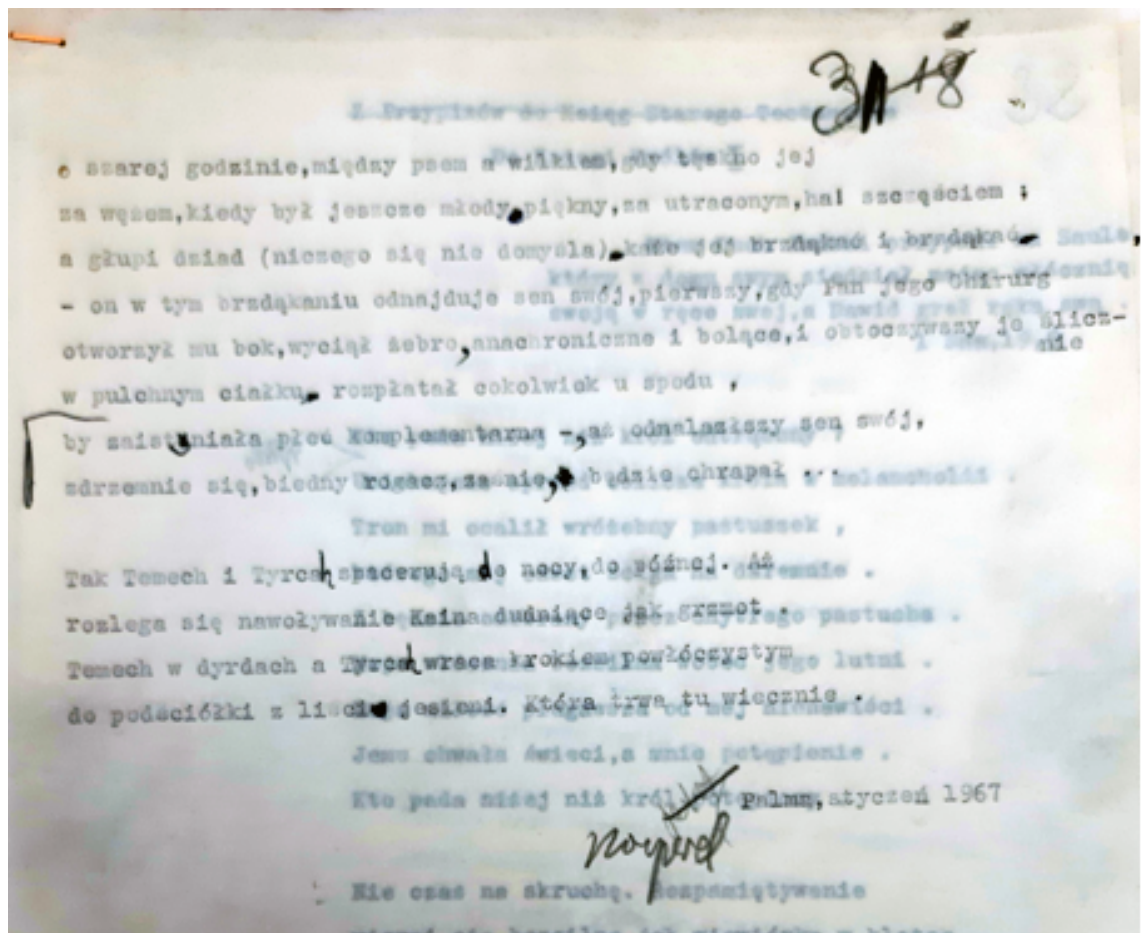
²³At Genesis IV, 17 [translation mine, PZ]





The next version of the work in progress can be seen below:

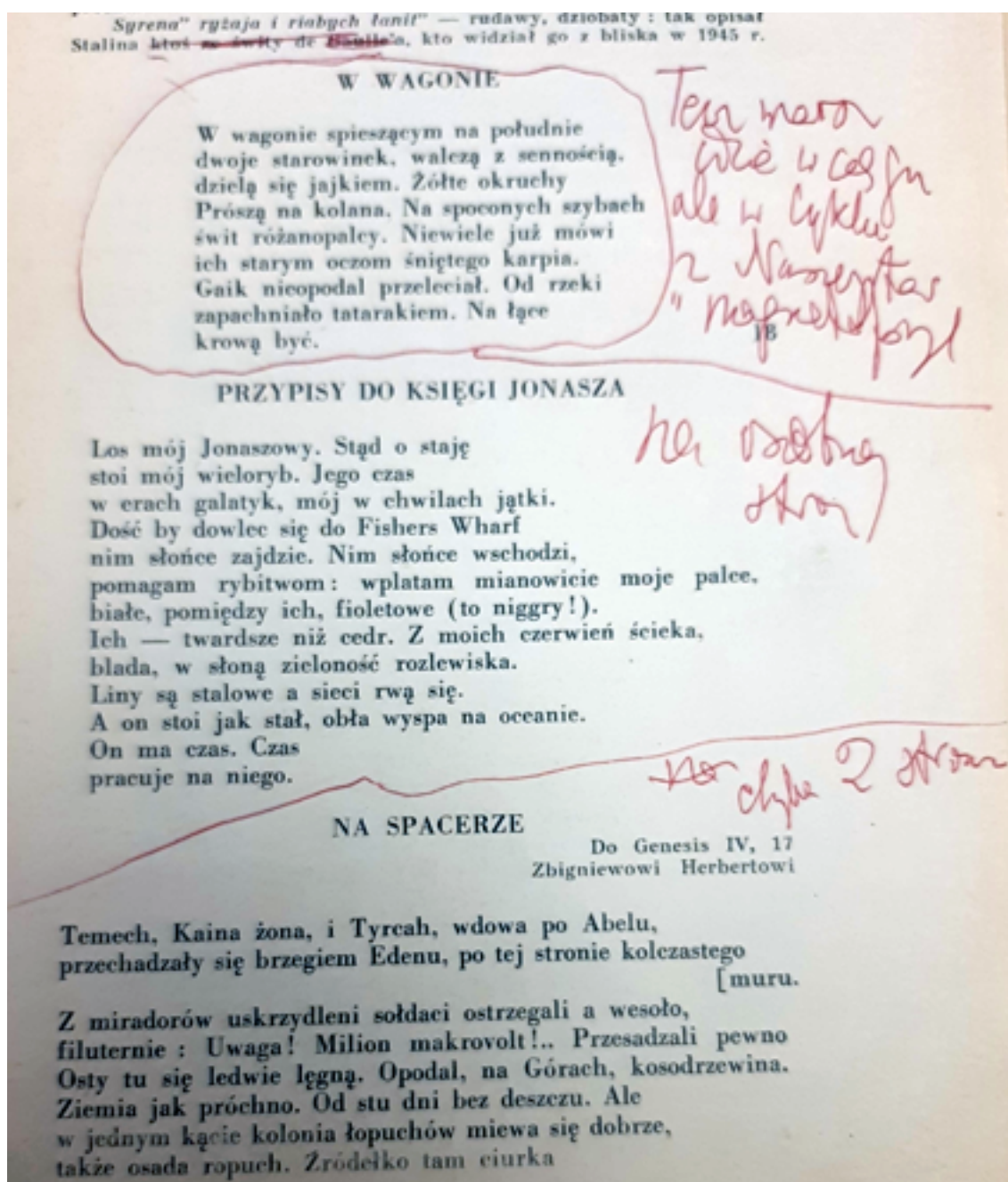




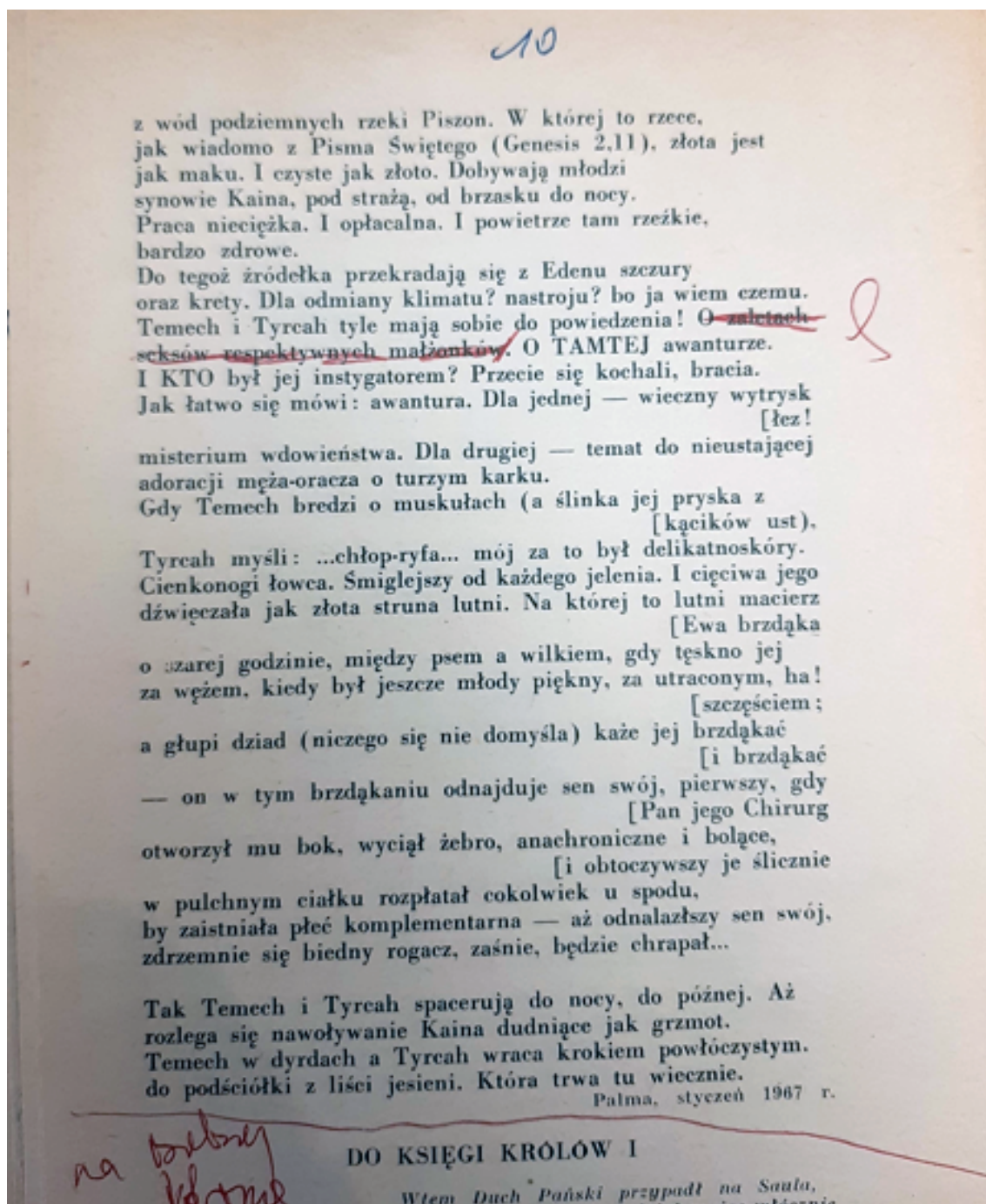
Box 11 Folder 355: The dedication is still there, earlier changes have already been incorporated into the text, there are minor corrections influencing the text's rhythm, and we can still see the phrase "O zaletach seksów respektywnych małżonków"²⁴, which would be crossed out later in the galleys. The words "tamtej" and "kto" are circled – we learn from the following documents that they are to be boldfaced.

²⁴On the advantages of sex of respective spouses [translation mine, PZ].

The galleys of the poem look as follows:

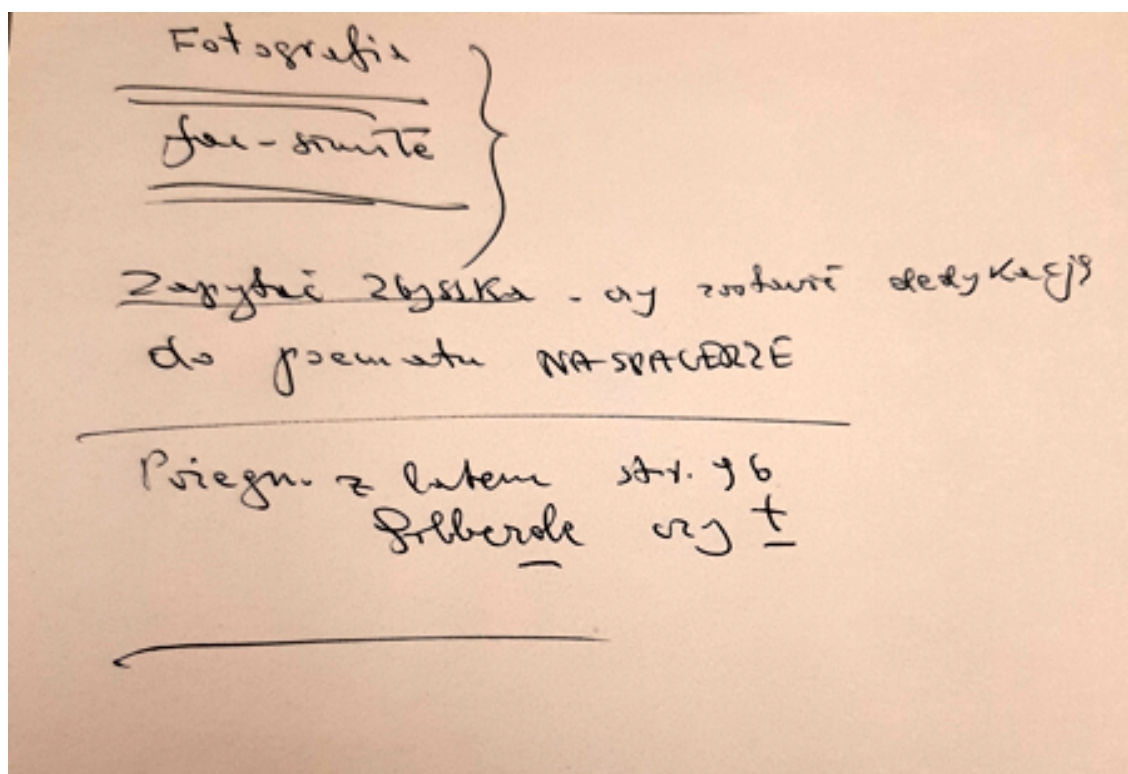


Box 11 Folder 369: As can be seen, the reference to *Genesis* and the dedication are still there. The reference to *Genesis* does not appear in the final version; most likely it was deemed unnecessary, especially since there is another reference that was preserved in the final version. The above-mentioned sentence disappears from the text, as if it had been too



much, a surplus unnecessarily narrowing down or limiting the thematic scope of the wives' conversation. It is as if the poet assumed that other parts of the text were enough to evoke the erotic context of the conversation as well – it was present in the designed book of poems almost until the end.

Another element of the text partially explains why the dedication is gone. It is a loose sheet of paper with various notes regarding the edition of the book of poems *Ciemne światło*:



Box 11 Folder 359: This note was not written by the poet; it was made by Andrzej Wat, probably writing down his father's comments regarding editing the book of poems, as indicated by the handwriting. As can be seen, they refer to a photograph (most likely of the author) which was supposed to be printed in the book of poems, as well as to the poem *Pożegnanie jesieni*. There is also a note "Zapytać Zbyszka – czy zostawić dedykację do poematu NA SPACZERZE"²⁵. There is no doubt that "Zbyszek" refers to Herbert. It is difficult to explain why the dedication was eventually removed, though probably it was Herbert's decision. Herbert might have been worried about possible negative consequences of the dedication in a poem about an openly anti-Soviet character. Wat was working on the book of poems in 1967, which eventually would be printed in an emigrant publishing house "Libella" in Paris – this is just one possible explanation for removing the dedication.

²⁵Ask Zbyszek – should we keep the dedication to Na spacerze? [translation mine, PZ].

The existence of a dedication that was there originally and later deleted remains an observed fact, a research fact that is difficult to ignore while reading *Na spacerze*, especially when we have access to the materials comprising the avant-text of the poem.

What is the relationship between *Na spacerze*, *U wrót doliny* and *Sprawozdanie z Raju*? The first and the third poem both refer to *Genesis*, the second one to the Apocalypse. It is difficult not to associate the poems with twentieth-century history, Wat's experience of a Soviet labor camp, and the fact that Herbert lived in a totalitarian state are two different and at the same time similar historical experiences, or rather extreme existential experiences. There is a special kind of dialogue between these texts; they complete one another, develop biblical motifs, and elaborate on them in many different ways. Herbert uses raw, aloof language, which resembles the language of formal documents, declarations, or announcements, yet he does not refrain from irony, whereas Wat stretches out his poems, uses metaphors, creates elaborate descriptions, circumlocutions, and comparisons, and the blade of his irony is as loud as the rumbling calls of Cain. Both texts use parables – Wat directly refers to the non-literary reality, to a specific historical experience, whereas Herbert employs Aesopian language. Interestingly, Wat left behind an unfinished, moving short story *Po śmierci* in which he describes a vision of a technocratically organized and managed paradise²⁶. According to Jan Zieliński, the short story may have been written during Wat's stay in Sopot, where he was supposed to work on a script for a movie about a German philosopher locked up in a hotel, which is at the same time both a concentration camp and the afterworld. According to Zieliński, this may be one of the "parapsychic experiences" (referred to as such by Wat himself) which he had in Sopot in the summer of 1954.

The motif of Cain is developed by Wat in the excellent *Poemat bukoliczny* (also an unfinished poem – we owe the fact that it exists in the literary world to the efforts of Ola Wat and a lot of editing work by Krzysztof Rutkowski and Jan Zieliński). There are many indications (especially the avant-texts at Beinecke) that the two poems were written almost parallel. At some point, Wat decided to abandon the longer poem and shifted to the much shorter *Na spacerze*. Frank L. Vigoda characterized *Poemat bukoliczny* as a "midrash"²⁷, i.e. a parable constituting a comment or interpretation of selected excerpts from the Bible (this poem also includes many characteristics of other genres, such as bucolic, farse, etc.). *Na spacerze*, similarly to other texts by Wat from the cycle *Przypisy do ksiąg Starego Testamentu*, is also a midrash, full of irony, or even sarcasm, emotionally moving due to its intellectual reflection and subtle sensuality. How

²⁶The short story was first published by me in "Teksty Drugie" 2009 No 6, p. 235-250. A transcript of the story based on an archival notebook was published in Wat, *Notatniki*.

²⁷Frank L. Vigoda, "Midrash Cain: A „Pastoral Poem”,” *Modern Poetry in Translation*, no. 18 (2001): 199–219.

can one tell the story of a world in which happen such horrible events as senseless acts of violence and revolutions which even God cannot control (there is a suggestion in the poem that God is responsible for it – this motif is confirmed and further developed in *Poemat bukoliczny*)? An eclectic, ironic text which defies conservative, poetics textbook classifications becomes the only possible form of expression. The world, history, and laughter (bitter laughter!) – these are the only things left in the vision of history presented in the text.

Research into avant-texts allows for uncovering interesting intertextual relations which complete previous interpretations of individual texts in a significant way. They also help realize that any text once published remains open, unrestrained and limitless – thanks to studying avant-texts, the perspective of a given text becomes significantly expanded and allows for many substantial questions closely linked to textual genesis, whose status is never clearly defined. Intertextual space is not limited only to conscious, teleological references, since it opens itself to the unknown and difficult to grasp field of the unconscious.

translated by Małgorzata Olsza

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KEYWORDS

avant-text

Z b i g n i e w H e r b e r t

INTERTEXTUALITY

ABSTRACT:

This text is devoted to avant-texts and their influence on intertextual relations. The avant-text research makes it possible to reveal intertextual relations that significantly complement the previous interpretations of individual works. They also help realize the fact that any text once printed remains open, uninhibited and unbound – thanks to the research into its avant-texts, reading perspectives are significantly expanded and allow to pose a lot of significant questions related to the genesis of the text. Intertextual space is not limited only to conscious, teleological references, because it opens to the field of the unconscious.

Aleksander Wat

g e n e t i c c r i t i c i s m

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The Materiality of Intertextuality: the Figure of the Shadow in Alison Bechdel's *Fun Home*

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Shortly after the publication of *Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic* in 2006, Alison Bechdel became one of the most renowned comic book authors, although her work, which is not so much a personal, but above all an artistic coming-out, is also a *bona fide* literary masterpiece. The cartoonist has been hailed as the new Nabokov, who can tell the story of a family in words and pictures.¹ The #1 *New York Times* bestselling book, *Fun Home* is a comic-book autobiography in which Bechdel examines her life. Growing up in the modern world, she tries to discover her personal, gender, and sexual identities, and this process of self-discovery begins with a difficult relationship with her father. *Fun Home* has been praised by literary critics for its intertextual references to the great modernist writers, including James Joyce, Albert Camus,

¹ "If Vladimir Nabokov had been a lesbian feminist graphic novelist, he might have produced something like this witty, erudite memoir", in: *Ms. Magazine*, 2006 (spring). *Fun Home* was also reviewed in *The Times* (16 Nov. 2006) by M. Reynolds and (25 Nov. 2006) by Neel Mukherjee, *Salon.com* (4 Jun. 2006) by D. Wolk, and in *USA Today*, *LA Times*, and *The Stranger*.

Scott Fitzgerald, Colette, and Marcel Proust. Bechdel incorporates literary references into the visual and verbal narrative, to which Leszek Karczewski refers as the strategy of revealing and hiding.²

Bechdel uses intertextuality not so much to challenge cultural codes or to locate her writing in the modernist canon, but to find the space in literature to tell her personal story. When Alison learns that her father had affairs with men, she has already come out to her family. She discovers her sexual orientation through the books she has read, many of which were recommended to her by her father. As an English teacher and literature lover, Bruce Bechdel, whose suicide is discussed in the first panels of the comic book, uses literature as the main means of communication; it is the Bechdels' private code. In the process of reading Bruce's favorite books, primarily Marcel Proust's *In Search of Lost Time*, Alison is looking for traces of her own and her father's subjectivity. This (literary) search is realized in the graphic and textual layer of the comic book.

The reader, Bechdel herself, looks at her reflection in the work, watching her, as Gillian Whitlock puts it, avatar,³ but also discovers transposed and translucent palimpsest-like signs of Proust. Flowers, plants, and bouquets that Bruce arranges (p. 92),⁴ lilacs at which he looks longingly (p. 92), the fact that he is often drawn from the side,⁵ but also numerous photographs constitute a specific kind of intertextuality⁶ – graphic, or rather intersemiotic – suspended between Proust's word and Bechdel's image. The nature of graphics, images, which consists primarily in, as Alva Noë puts it, presence-as-absence (making something that does not exist appear before our eyes), is extremely direct. As such, it is something “more” and something more sensual than a mere description.⁷ The comic book becomes a materialized version of the word, not only because it relies on individual textual and graphic panels, but also because of its spatial and temporal arrangement. The comic book does not only play with images, but also with the white empty spaces between them, which makes the reader “progress” through the narrative almost as if they were strolling through the streets of a city whose model they are looking at.⁸ Such a view of comics as a model gives rise to a new type of intertextuality that is more than just a narrative tool.

² Leszek Karczewski, “Komiksiara z suchymi oczami. Fun Home Alison Bechdel jako krypto-bio-grafia,” in *Literatura prze-pisana 2. Od zapomnianych teorii do kryminału*, ed. Agnieszka Izdebska, Agnieszka Przybyszewska, and Danuta Szajnert (Łódź: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, 2016), 136.

³ G. Whitlock refers to an autobiographical comics that was drawn and written by a single author as “autographics.” She refers to the graphic representation of the author in an autobiographical comics as an “avatar.” Gillian Whitlock, “Autographics: The seeing ‘I’ of the comics,” *MFS - Modern Fiction Studies* 52, no. 4 (2006): 965–979.

⁴ Alison Bechdel, *Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic*, 2015.

⁵ Proust often describes Albertine as seen from the side, see: Marcel Proust, *The captive, the fugitive*, trans. D. J. Enright and Terence Kilmartin, vol. 5 (London: Vintage, 2000), 57.

⁶ On intertextuality beyond the text see: Ryszard Nycz, “Intertekstualność i jej zakresy: teksty, gatunki, światy,” in *Tekstowy świat: poststrukturalizm a wiedza o literaturze* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo IBL, 1995), 83–84.

⁷ See Alva Noë, *Varieties of Presence* (Cambridge [Estados Unidos]; London: Harvard University Press, 2012), 83–86. “Presence-as-absence” is one of the most important features of images and photos. On crossing the boundaries of the physical world by the comics and its sensual character see also: Scott McCloud, *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art* (New York, NY: William Morrow, HarperCollins Publishers, 2018), 26–59.

⁸ On the concept of the gutter see: McCloud, *Understanding Comics*, 66. The term “model” to describe the literary world of Bruno Schulz was first used by Paweł Tomczok, “The Reality of the Intermediary,” *Forum Poetyki*, no. 15–16 (zima/wiosna 2019): 6–21.

When we compare how Proust creates his outstanding seven-volume work with the way in which Bechdel creates her seven-chapter comic book, we should look not only at text, which has been traditionally regarded as the space of intertextuality, but also at word and image. As regards the latter, the figure of the shadow is the most important reference to Proust's work.

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On the final page of chapter four, Bechdel writes about a sense of loss that is experienced during translation. Referring to two English translations of Proust's work, *Remembrance of Things Past* and the more recent *In Search of Lost Time*, the author states that the true meaning of *À la recherche du temps perdu*, and the double meaning of the word *perdu*, has been lost in translation.⁹ "What's lost in translation is the complexity of loss itself," Bechdel writes, and underneath we see two panels with drawn photographs (p. 120). One photograph shows Bechdel's father, wearing a woman's bathing suit. In the next two photographs, arranged next to each other, we see Bruce sunbathing on the roof of a dorm and Alison, who looks remarkably similar to her father. However, according to the narrator, they only share "the pained grin, the flexible wrists, (...) the angle of shadow falling across our faces" (p. 120). Undoubtedly, the figure of the shadow has been used deliberately – the words quoted above end the chapter titled, expressly, "In the Shadow of Young Girls in Flower."¹⁰

The metaphor of the shadow, crucial for describing the father-daughter relationship, can be read in two ways. The picture of Bruce in a swimsuit, posing gracefully, which opens and closes the chapter, seems to suggest that it is Bruce himself who is associated with the girls from Balbec described by Proust, while the daughter remains (grows up), like a translation in relation to the original text, (in) the shadow of her own father. Bechdel, however, wears a mask of the shadow also as an artist. As the author, the narrator, and the protagonist, she is a complex entity – she is both textual and graphic, external and internal, bodily and textual. She is sylleptic, as Nycz puts it,¹¹ or, as Whitlock claims, she is an avatar. Or perhaps she is a shadow, which, as Hans Belting argues, "is both the affirmation and the negation of the body, it both denotes and obscures the body."¹² Such an approach would correspond to the construction of the Proustian subject. As Maurice Blanchot writes,

the time of the narrative, when, although he says "I," it is no longer the real Proust or the writer Proust who has the ability to speak, but their metamorphosis into that *shadow* that is the narrator turned into a "character" of the book, the one who in the story writes a story that is the work itself, and produces in his turn other metamorphoses of himself that are the different "I's" whose experiences he recounts.¹³

⁹ Bechdel observes that *perdu* "means not just lost but ruined, undone, wasted, wrecked, and spoiled," p. 119.

¹⁰ "In the Shadow of Young Girls in Flower" is the translation of James Grieve. The canonical translation of C. K. Moncrieff, "Within a Budding Grove," does not mention the shadow, which was important for both Proust and Bechdel (*l'ombre* in the French original title *À l'ombre des jeunes filles en fleurs*).

¹¹ Ryszard Nycz, "Tropy 'ja': koncepcje podmiotowości w literaturze polskiej ostatniego stulecia," *Teksty Drugie* 26, no. 2 (1994): 7–27.

¹² Hans Belting, *An Anthropology of Images Picture, Medium, Body.*, trans. Thomas Dunlap (Princeton/NJ); Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2014), 128.

¹³ Maurice Blanchot, "The Experience of Proust," in *The book to come*, trans. Charlotte Mandell (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2003), 15.

The formula of the shadow informs the creation of the “I” as the subject and the object of the story for both Proust and Bechdel. The shadow points to the body and thus, as a category, represents the subject in the textual and graphic work. Given the visual context, the shadow is even more telling – it is both a sign of materiality and material in itself (if we consider light, shading, the line). In comics, the shadow does not only function at the meta level (as in literature), but it becomes a visual sign.

In *Fun Home*, the memory of the shadow is also referred to in the narrative. Especially in the context of Bruce’s obsession with color. When young Alison is filling in the *Wind in the Willows* coloring book, intending to color the gypsy caravan with her favorite blue crayon, her father exclaims: “What are you doing? That’s the canary-colored caravan!” Then, he takes his daughter’s place and continues “Here. I’ll do the rest in yellow, and your blue side will be in shadow” (pp. 130-131). Again, the figure of the shadow seems to be the place which Bruce assigns to his daughter. This “crayonic tour de force,” as Alison puts it, seems to be stuck in Alison’s mind – as an independent artist, she creates a work that is devoid of color. In the comic’s poetics of black and white, *Fun Home* relies on shadow imaging. In the context of Bruce’s obsession with color, the last frame of chapter five is particularly interesting. Father and daughter are standing on the porch and looking at the sky (p. 150). The evening sky, as we can see in the panel, is animated by “the infinite gradations of color in a fine sunset.” Bruce is fascinated with the view. Therefore, we can treat *Fun Home*’s black and white color palette as a kind of rebellion against the “crayonic tour de force,” especially since Bechdel has admitted in one of the interviews that she gave up color because of her father’s obsession.¹⁴ We should also comment on the figures of Bruce and Alison: they are standing in the shadow of their porch and looking at the sky; painted in black, they literally turn into shadows, but at the same time, lined up side by side, their bodies and genders become indistinguishable; they are similar, because they are nothing but an image. And as Belting points out, the image, and the shadow as a natural image, defies the body: “only in images we free ourselves from our bodies, from which we distance ourselves in the gaze.”¹⁵

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According to Belting, the natural distance to the body is created after death. The corpse is no longer the body. Lifeless, it becomes a formula for the image of the body, a representation of what it once was. It is only “the shadow soul.”¹⁶ Belting’s metaphor of the shadow soul, associated with Plato, can also be adapted to psychological analysis. Respectively, the word *psyche* may be defined in relation to certain aspects of human internal life. In Jungian psychology, the shadow means the dark side of our psyche, “the negative side of our personality,” which is rooted primarily in emotions (in Freudian psychology, the shadow is associated with the concept of *id*).¹⁷ We banish negative, immoral, and unwanted personality traits to the sphere of

¹⁴See Alison Bechdel, *Alison Bechdel: Conversations*, ed. Rachel R Martin (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2018), 53.

¹⁵Bechdel, 32, 225.

¹⁶Bechdel, 120.(emphasis mine, IS).

¹⁷Carl G. Jung, *The Collected Works of C.G. Jung*, trans. Richard F. C. Hull (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1953), 10.

the shadow. Nevertheless, similarly to the actual shadow, we cannot escape from the shadow of the psyche; while we may not acknowledge it, it is with us at all times. However, similarly to the physical shadow, it can only be seen from the right angle and in the right light, which for Jung was associated with “a little self-criticism.”¹⁸

Importantly, the shadow is an archetype (along with the *anima* and the *animus*), which in Jungian psychology always stems from the collective unconscious.¹⁹ This means that the shadow also embraces character traits and behaviors that we reject, because they do not comply with social norms, as a result of external judgments or cultural disapproval. Given these aspects, it is worth paying attention to the shadow of Bruce Bechdel’s personality. Relegated into the shadow sphere as immoral and socially unacceptable, homosexual desires become an unconscious and unwanted component of the father’s *psyche*, which disrupts the creation of the subject’s coherent identity. And the act of self-knowledge requires moral firmness. As Jung writes, “[t]o become conscious of it involves recognizing the dark aspects of the personality as present and real. This act is the essential condition for any kind of self-knowledge, and it therefore, as a rule, meets with considerable resistance.”²⁰ Resistance provokes projections. If we are afraid to come to terms with our personality traits, we often project them onto other people. The cold and distant manner with which Bruce treats his daughter can be read as a sign of his projection; Bruce recognizes in Alison homosexual desires, which he associates with the “dark” aspects of his own personality. Similarly, disgust for the practices of Albertina and Baron de Charlus could result from Marcel’s (or even Proust’s) unacknowledged homoerotic desires. However, for Proust, the shadow carries still other meanings. Let me quote a passage in which the protagonist sees Albertina for the first time:

If we thought that the eyes of a girls like that were merely two glittering sequins of mica, we should not be athirst to know her and to unite her life with ours. But we feel that what shines in those reflecting discs is not due solely to their material composition; that it is, unknown to us, the dark shadows of the ideas that the creature is conceiving, relative to the people and places that she knows – the turf of racecourses, the sand of cycling tracks over which (...) she would have drawn me after her (...) more seductive than she of the Persian paradise – the shadows, too, of the home to which she will presently return, of the plans that she is forming or that others have formed for her; and above all that it is she, with her desires, her sympathies, her revulsions, her obscure and incessant will.²¹

For the protagonist, the eyes are reflecting discs in which the soul is visible as shadows, be it the “dark shadows” of the female psyche (desires, seductive sexuality) or “the shadows of the home” which may be read as an expression of longing, “desires,” and “sympathies.” The shadow becomes the intermediary of the human, unknowable, *psyche*. Importantly, the

¹⁸Jung, 10.

¹⁹Jung, 8.

²⁰Jung, 8.

²¹Marcel Proust, *In the Shadow of Young Girls in Flower*, trans. James Grieve (New York: Penguin, 2005), 287. (emphasis mine, IS). Proust also writes about “shadows” in the original: *es noires ombres des idées* (“the dark shadows of the ideas”), *les ombres aussi de la maison* (“the shadows, too, of the home”), in: Marcel Proust, *A la Recherche du Temps perdu. Tome 2, A l’ombre des jeunes filles en fleurs. 1-2-3* (Paris: Gallimard, 1919), 39.

shadows of the soul are not solely dark; on the contrary, they are representative of human desires and dreams.

It seems that Bechdel, as a mature artist, is aware of all the shadows with which her childhood world was filled. And, in keeping with Jungian psychology, she does not recognize them as negative forces. When she draws herself in the moments of self-knowledge, wandering around the house and taking pictures, shadow imagery penetrates the panels (pp. 128-129). Alison points out that a nearby factory pollutes a local river and the sky. And although the effects of environmental pollution are deadly, they become a source of beauty in Bechdel's narrative: the dust makes the sky turn different colors and the stream is so clean that it sparkles. The narrator writes: "Wading in this fishless creek and swooning at the salmon sky, I learned firsthand that most elemental of all ironies" (p. 129). Alison acknowledges the shadows, which were created as a result of hidden "pollution." Importantly, in one of the panels (p. 128), the world around Alison is hidden in the shadow, and on the next page (p. 129), the world is illuminated, and Alison is in the shadow. To draw on Jung, Alison integrates the shadow, which in this case is not only the darker side of man, but of the world as well. The polluted world (filled with shadows) may also be read as a positive vision. When Alison becomes a shadow, she accepts the dark traits of her personality, because she knows that she shares these qualities with her father. She understands that when tamed, these traits can help her build a coherent identity.

IV

The connection between father and daughter in the shadow of their corresponding *psyche* is visually rendered in the comics: when Alison and Bruce are standing on the porch and watching the evening sky, their bodies "connect" – they are both drawn as black silhouettes. Indistinct, colorless, dark, as shadows, they reflect one another. As a peculiar translation of the original, Alison is the shadow of her father, but Bruce, who is drawn in the comics as a black-and-white figure of the double, is also the shadow of his daughter or, since he is dead, a shadow in itself. As Belting observes,

The dead no longer *throw* a shadow because they have become shadows themselves. What is true of the shadow is also true of the image: it cannot produce images of its own the way the body does, because it already *is* an image, and as such is different from the body.²²

The motif of the image which supposedly "cannot produce images of its own" is especially interesting in the context of another medium present in *Fun Home*, namely photography. Photography and the action of taking photographs play an important role in the comic book (pp. 120, 128-129). Also, the photographs of father and daughter discussed above, in which Alison and Bruce strike a similar pose (p. 120), as well as the photograph of Roy, a gardener, Alison's babysitter, and Bruce's lover, which occupies a prominent position in the comics as a 2-page spread (pp. 100-101), confirm that for Bechdel, representation in the form of photography has a special meaning. The use of photography in *Fun Home* is especially interesting,

²²Belting, *An Anthropology of Images Picture, Medium, Body.*, 131.

since all photographs have been reproduced in drawing. As such, they constitute an integral part of Bechdel's style (i.e. they do not differ from other images), and at the same time, they are a "tangible" proof of presence.²³ This is particularly important when we acknowledge that at times, the ontological status of the protagonist/father is questioned, because he is featured in the story only as a memory; Bruce dies under the wheels of a truck and his alleged suicide is constantly questioned in the comic book. The father as a figure of the shadow without the body, an image that has no reference in reality, can be most faithfully rendered by means of photography. "If photography is a trace of reality," Anna Jarmuszkiewicz writes, "it is also the medium of the body that produces its shadow. However, temporal linearity causes the shadow to separate from the body in photography. It is produced when the photograph is taken, but disappears after it is developed and when it is viewed."²⁴ Indeed, as Roland Barthes further observes, "it is as if the Photograph always carries its referent with itself, both affected by the same amorous or funeral immobility, at the very heart of the moving world (...)." ²⁵ Barthes points to the seemingly positive feature of photography, the fact that it "always carries its referent with itself," yet he also emphasizes the importance of "funeral immobility." Both quotes draw attention to the same aspect: photography is inseparable from Thanatos; it immobilizes the body, kills its movement, and deprives it of the shadow, which is a testimony to its materiality and a sign of life. The moving body that is arrested in a dead image is easily associated with death. It is worth paying attention to this aspect in the context of Bechdel's father.

Shadow and photography have a similar mimetic value, because they are nothing more than a likeness of the world; they correspond to reality in a similar way (and, to draw on Charles Peirce, we can say that they are icons) and at the same time they can be read as evidence of the physical presence of matter (they are also indices).²⁶ Shadow and photography, which only mediate reality, intertwine in *In Search of Lost Time* primarily in the context of memory. It is memory that elicits shadows in Proust's work:

Sometimes, by a defect in the internal lightning which spoiled the success of the play, the appearance of my memories on the stage giving me the illusion of real life, I really believed that I had arranged to meet Albertine, that I was seeing her again, but then I found myself incapable of advancing to meet her, of uttering the words which I meant to say to her, to rekindle in order to see her the torch that had been quenched (...) as suddenly one sees in the faulty projection of a magic lantern a huge shadow, which ought not to be visible, obliterate the figures on the slide, which is the shadow of the lantern itself, or that of the operator.²⁷

²³As Roland Barthes observes, "in the Photograph, the event is never transcended for the sake of something else: the Photograph always leads the corpus I need back to the body I see. (...) the *This* [is] (...) the *Tuché*, the Occasion, the Encounter, the Real (...)." In: Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (New York: The Noonday Press, 2012), 4.

²⁴Anna Jarmuszkiewicz, "Widma i emanacje. O związkach fotografii ze śmiercią. Przypadek Prousta," in *Pomiędzy tożsamością a obrazem*, ed. Miłosz Markiewicz et al. (Katowice: Wyd. Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, 2016), 88.

²⁵Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 5–6.

²⁶To learn more about the connections between photography and shadow see: Victor Ieronim Stoichiță, *A Short History of the Shadow*, trans. Anne-Marie Glasheen (London: Reaktion Books, 1997), 105–17.

²⁷Marcel Proust, *The Sweet Cheat Gone: In Search of Lost Time*, trans. Charles Kenneth Scott-Moncrieff, vol. 6 (U.K.: Dodo Press, 2005), 108.

Memory, seen as a picture full of light and shadow, appears before the protagonist's eyes almost right here and right now. It is an image, a revelation, that is always seen for the first time; however, this image, right here and right now, seen for the first time, attests the presence of "in the past," just as "here" is also "there."²⁸ This is what photography is: it is the overlapping of two temporal and spatial planes, both equally real and, seemingly, present. In *In Search of Lost Time*, memory also works in a photographic way: "What we take in the presence of the beloved object, is merely a negative film; we develop it later, when we are at home, and have once again found at our disposal that inner darkroom, the entrance to which is barred to us so long as we are with other people."²⁹ What we remember, what is "in the past," is like an undeveloped photograph; only reality develops the photograph, releasing the memory that appears before our eyes. Remembering is like developing a film, which, however, would not be possible if it were not for the signs of the present, such as the madeleine, the smell of hawthorn, or the uneven pavement slabs; the present and the past are inextricably linked, because in the now, the past, which relies on memory, becomes tangible and real.³⁰

Both Proust and Bechdel create their stories in accordance with the principles that govern memory and these principles are reflected in imagery. Bechdel builds the fourth chapter, "In the Shadow of Young Girls in Flower," in a manner very similar to Proust – she refers not only to images, but also to photography, and the play of light and shadow. As such, Bechdel recreates the ways in which the past functions. Indeed, the past is still alive and present in description (when it comes to Proust's novel) and, what is very important, in imagery (when it comes to Bechdel's comic book). Bechdel illustrates what Proust "paints" only with words. This in-depth intertextual relation is based on creative and artistic actions (i.e. developing negatives from memory) and it also plays a crucial role in discovering the truth. The photographs and images of the past, arranged side by side, are signs of the father's secret; they are a testimony to the reality that, for young Alison, was still imperceptible at the time. Although Alison lived in that reality and experienced it, it could only reveal itself in the now, and that only through mediation; it is in the pictures, and not in the experience, that the true reality is revealed.³¹

Let me at this point quote Michał Paweł Markowski who in the preface to his book *Pragnienie Obecności* [The Desire of Presence] writes:

The limits of visibility coincide with the limits of representation. This means that representation makes visible what it presents. And *vice versa*: what is not presented escapes from the space of visibility, because we cannot see what has not been presented.³²

²⁸Blanchot, "The Experience of Proust," 15.

²⁹Proust, *In the Shadow of Young Girls in Flower*, 345.

³⁰See: Jarmuszkiewicz, "Widma i emanacje. O związkach fotografii ze śmiercią. Przypadek Prousta," 96.

³¹Gilles Deleuze, *Proust and signs*, trans. Richard Howard (London: Athlone, 2000), 95–105.

³²Michał Paweł Markowski, "Prolog. Ikony i idole," in *Pragnienie obecności: Filozofie reprezentacji od Platona do Kartezjusza* (Gdańsk: Słowo/obraz terytoria, 1999), 21.

Bruce's homosexuality, which was invisible during Alison's childhood, is revealed in the panels of the comic book: in Bruce's looks, in the image of his tanned body, in the face painted with pomade, in the photograph in which we see him in a women's bathing suit, and in the photographs which show Roy, a gardener and Bruce's lover, half-naked. It is only when experiences encoded in thoughts are materially represented that they become visible. It seems that it was easier to achieve for Bechdel, who uses graphics tools, than for Proust; her story is devoid of excess words. Also, as a comic book, *Fun Home* is endowed with an additional dimension of visibility that is missing in the novel. I refer here to empty, white, graphic and not graphic spaces between panels (gutters). As Markowski observes, "[t]here are no representations that would not demand to be looked at; there is no gaze that would not wander among various representations."³³ However, when we think of such a specific medium as comics, we cannot fully agree with the above statement: after all, the eyes of the reader who is reading *Fun Home* may wander in-between panels. Although it does not illustrate anything, white, partly covered and partly exposed, becomes visible; and its visibility differs from the kind of visibility associated with the pages of the novel, because the spatial dimension plays a more important role than the temporal dimension. In addition, in the comics, it is in these empty places, in the gutters, that the story materializes; the gutter stands for movement and change, while the panels tend to be associated with stillness. It enhances the sensual character of the comics and intensifies the experience of its tangibility, thanks to which the medium becomes a model: it creates a unified whole, which, although material and spatial, still acts as a kind of an image, a representation.

translated by Małgorzata Olsza

³³Markowski, 21.

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KEYWORDS

c o i c s

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ABSTRACT:

In this article, I analyse Alison Bechdel's autobiographical comic book *Fun Home*, which has been hailed as the "event of the year," demonstrating how its visual and verbal layer engages in an intertextual dialogue with Marcel Proust's *In Search of Lost Time*. Proust's novel becomes the main intermediary in the double (graphic and textual) coding of gender, sexual, and artistic identity of the main characters: father and daughter. The figure of the shadow plays a crucial role in description and representation; adapted from Jungian psychoanalysis, it takes on a more material and less abstract character in Bechdel's comic book.

IDENTITY

psychoanalysis

P R O U S T

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„Are You Affected by Time?”. The Photo-graphemicality of a Text on the Example of Tomasz Różycki’s *Las tropikalny**

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The book of poems *Kolonie* by Tomasz Różycki contains the following poem:

Kiedy dla mnie zatańczysz? Skończyło się lato,
wielkie desanty dmuchawców, zielona fabryka,
wchodząca nam do łóżka, brudząca nam życiem
pościel, ubrania, palce. Było tak bogato

i dzieci nam urosły, i wojnę ze światem
prowadziliśmy znowu, tak, jak to wynika
ze zdjęć, będąc po stronie świata. Czy dotyka
cię czas? Ze zdjęcia na zdjęcie, czy przypadkiem

nie znika jakiś drobny szczegół? I czy w końcu
tylko już tło zostanie? Robione pod słońce
fotografie z wesela. Poprawiny były
i jutro będą znowu, chociaż puste wszystkie

butelki ze złym winem i na dnie kieliszka
zawsze coś pozostaje, jakies fusy, miłość¹²

¹ Tomasz Różycki, „Las tropikalny,” in *Kolonie* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Znak, 2007), 66.

² When will you dance for me? The summer is over,/ huge landing operations of dandelion clocks, a green factory,/ coming to our bed, smudging us with life/ bed sheets, clothes, fingers. It used to be so rich/ and our children grew up, and a war against the world/ we were waging again, as can be seen from/ photos, being on the world's side. Are you affected/ by time? From one photo to another, is not by any chance/ some minor detail disappearing? And eventually/ will there only be the backdrop left? Taken in full sunlight/ wedding photos. Champagne breakfast took place/ and will take place tomorrow as well, although empty/ are all the bottles with bad wine and at the bottom of a glass/ there is always something left, some grounds, love. [translation mine, PZ]

In *Poezja bliska*, which is an introduction to the book *Obroty liter. Szkice o twórczości Tomasza Różyckiego*, Magdalena Rabizo-Birek places Różycki's work in the context of the Polish literary tradition in the following way:

Różycki is defined by critics with metaphorical quasi-terms, such as *o'harist classicist* (Karol Maliszewski) or *romantic classicist* (Magdalena Rabizo-Birek). He has also been considered to be the leading representative of "the school of picture", "the poetry of vision", the "encouraged imagination trend" in the poetry of 1970s (Marian Stala, Jakub Momro, Karol Maliszewski) ³.

Among the topics undertaken by Różycki, the issue of Kresy, which is directly connected to his family history (they were relocated from around Lviv to Opole), takes a special place. In Różycki's poetry, the experience of longing and the sense of a lack of bond with the gesture of "«creating possible worlds»"⁴ (as put by Magdalena Piotrowska Grot, inspired by – among others – Edward W. Said), as well as the awareness that often the only things left to our disposal are "false maps" (Różycki's expression) are seen. Deciphering them grants access to another space: both oneiric as well as full of loneliness and the sense of loss.

The well-thought-out (or even sophisticated) structure of his books of poems are another characteristic feature of Różycki's poetics. *Kolonie*, which contains the poem *Las tropikalny*, is an excellent example; it contains 77 French sonnets, across which the phrase „Kiedy zaczynałem pisać, nie wiedziałem jeszcze”⁵ reoccurs almost in a chorus-like fashion. Its developments, as observed by Justyna Tabaczewska, are "an attempt at a consciously indefinite, inconclusive answer"⁶.

In her text discussing translation-related issues, Magdalena Drzęźła highlights the fact that this book of poems is in a way subordinated to the strangeness category, which is evident, for example, in the titles of individual poems⁷. Likewise, in the case of *Las tropikalny*, the title clearly evokes the contexts of travelling⁸. However, at the same time, the issue of unity in *Las tropikalny* goes beyond simple geographical relations, reaching the very core of human identity. It is contained in the experience of the passage of time, puberty- and ageing-related transformations, and the awareness of one's own mortality. All these problems are evident in the confrontation with old photographs.

³ Magdalena Rabizo-Birek, "Poezja bliska," in *Obroty liter: Szkice o twórczości Tomasza Różyckiego*, ed. Anna Czabanowska-Wróbel and Magdalena Rabizo-Birek (Kraków: Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych UNIVERSITAS, 2019), 12.

⁴ Magdalena Piotrowska-Grot, "Po kolei wszystkie warianty," in *Obroty liter: Szkice o twórczości Tomasza Różyckiego*, ed. Anna Czabanowska-Wróbel and Magdalena Rabizo-Birek (Kraków: Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych UNIVERSITAS, 2019), 119.

⁵ "When I was starting to write I was yet to learn..." [translation mine, PZ]. Importantly, there are seven poems containing this phrase.

⁶ Justyna Tabaczewska, "Powtórzenia i ponowienia,/. Tomasz Różycki a kwestia oryginalności," in *Obroty liter: Szkice o twórczości Tomasza Różyckiego*, ed. Anna Czabanowska-Wróbel and Magdalena Rabizo-Birek (Kraków: Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych UNIVERSITAS, 2019), 171.

⁷ Magdalena Drzęźła, "O problemach tłumaczenia," *Kwartalnik Opolski : organ Opolskiego Towarzystwa Przyjaciół Nauk.*, no. 4 (2010): 174.

⁸ See Mira Rosenthal, "Teraźniejszość jako niekończąca się chwila wahania," in *Obroty liter: Szkice o twórczości Tomasza Różyckiego*, ed. Anna Czabanowska-Wróbel and Magdalena Rabizo-Birek, trans. Tomasz Bilczewski and Anna Kowalcze-Pawlik (Kraków: Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych UNIVERSITAS, 2019), 277–84.

The way in which Różycki introduces the photography motif into his poem seems to be especially interesting. Neither the title nor the first stanza – despite their somewhat “pictorial” character, a characteristic feature of this type poetry (as indicated by Magdalena Rabizob-Birek, following other critics) – seem to suggest the topic of the poem, although the tone of the whole text relies on it to a great extent. A photograph appears only midway through the second stanza, and the moment when this medium is first introduced coincides with the transformation of optics, employed by Różycki in the first part of the sonnet.

In his research into the visual aspects of literary texts, Edward Balcerzan used the term *visualism*, which he coined – as he highlighted – “*per analogiam* to such linguistic terms as vulgarisms, poetisms, technicisms, etc”⁹. The term was supposed to refer to “words and expressions from the lexical-phraseological level — belonging to linguistic representations of human visual experiences”¹⁰. Taking a similar path, I would like to propose using the term *photographemicality* (understood as a collection of characteristics indicating similarities between a text and a photography) and *photo-grapheme* (their individual textual realization). If *photographemicality* would refer to the whole text (or some of its parts), *photo-graphemes* would be the basic elements in which the relationship between the text and the photograph is evinced. If the chiasmus indicated by Adam Dziadek as a figure highlighting the relations between visual arts and literature¹¹ is accepted, then a *photo-grapheme* would be the knot in its heart, the central place, determining a “point of contact” between the two media.

Both proposed terms are clearly inspired by the Derridean “grammatology” categories. Obviously, Derrida’s definition of *grapheme* is significant here:

Gramme or *grapheme* — even before being determined as human [...] or nonhuman — would thus name the element. An element without simplicity. An element, whether it is understood as the medium or as the irreducible atom, of the arche-synthesis in general, of what one must forbid oneself to define within the system of oppositions of metaphysics, of what consequently one should not even call *experience* in general, that is to say the origin of *meaning* in general¹².

Referring to Derrida allows us to stress the “literateness” of registering pictures through photography, immersing it in the semiotics space. *Of Grammatology* by Derrida decentralizes the “phono-centric” language model, redirecting attention to visual, material traces of texts.

Lee Edelman used Derrida’s categories in a similar way – although completely different from the conceptual perspective – in his *Homographesis*. When quoting a paper by Marie-Rose Logan, he observes that:

⁹ Edward Balcerzan, “Widzialne i niewidzialne w sztuce słowa,” in *Kulturowe wizualizacje doświadczenia*, ed. Włodzimierz Bolecki and Adam Dziadek (Warszawa: Instytut badań literackich : Fundacja „Centrum międzynarodowych badań polonistycznych, 2010), 489.

¹⁰ Balcerzan, “Widzialne i niewidzialne w sztuce słowa.”

¹¹ See Adam Dziadek, *Obrazy i wiersze: z zagadnień interferencji sztuk w polskiej poezji współczesnej* (Katowice: Wyd. Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, 2011), 16.

¹² Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore; London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 9.

[...] Logan defines "graphesis" as the "nodal point of the articulation of a text", that "de-limits the locus where the question of writing is raised" and "de-scribes the action of writing as it actualizes itself in the text independently of the notion of intentionality"¹³. Following, that is, from Derrida's post-Saussurean characterization of writing as a system of "différance" that operates without positive terms and endlessly defers the achievement of identity as self-presence, the "graphesis", the entry into writing, that "homographesis" would hope to specify is not only one which "homosexual identity" is deferentially conceptualized by a heterosexual culture as something legibly written on the body, but also one in which the meaning of "homosexual identity" itself is determined through its assimilation to the position of writing with the tradition of Western metaphysics"¹⁴.

In the case of the photographic "graphesis", I am mostly interested in the issue of "de-scription", an inseparable element of registering an image. This value is encoded already in the etymology of the word denominating that medium, coined by John Herschel (*photo* – referring to light, *graphie* – writing). This also allows us to highlight the common "ancestry" of writing and photographic images, as well as demonstrate parallels between those two ways of recording reality, including in the context of technological transformations.

Lee Edelman described the relations between the notion of writing and the act of writing (of course, taking from Derrida):

[...] "writing", especially when taken as a gerund that approximates the meaning of "graphesis", functions to articulate identity only in relation to signs that are structured, as Derrida puts it, by their "non-self-identity". Writing, therefore, though it marks or describes those differences upon which the specification of identity depends, works simultaneously, as Logan puts it, to "de-scribe", efface, or undo identity by framing difference as the misrecognition of a "différance", whose negativity, whose purely relational articulation, calls into question the possibility of any positive presence or discrete identity. Like writing, then, homographesis would name a double operation: one serving the ideological purposes of a conservative social order intent on codifying identities in its labor of disciplinary inscription, and the other resistant to that categorization, intent on *de*-scribing the identities that order has so oppressively *inscribed*¹⁵.

Although in the case of photography the issue of (mechanical) record naturally comes to the fore, the transposition of this medium in the modern Polish poetry also carries some identity value, especially when considering the community-based aspect of the digital breakthrough. As Catherina Malabou observes, "according to the ontology of the graph, the source [...] can only be imagined in terms of a trace, i.e. its own inner difference"¹⁶ — with its primordially over form¹⁷. The physicality aspect is also interesting in terms of photo-graphemicality; after all, the *machines de vision* are only an extension of the eye or the hand (as Paul Virilio would like them to).

¹³Marie-Rose Logan, "Graphesis...", *Yale French Studies* 52, no. 4 (1975): 12.

¹⁴Lee Edelman, *Homographesis*. (London, New York: Routledge, 1994), 9.

¹⁵Ibidem

¹⁶Catherina Malabou, *Plastyczność u zmięczeniu pisma: dialektyka, destrukcja, dekonstrukcja*, trans. Piotr Skalski (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 2018), 109.[translation mine, PZ]

¹⁷Malabou, 25.

The aim of the proposed terms is to make it easier to define any kind of relationships – semantic, as well as formal or stylistic – connecting the way of expressing poetic thoughts and the creation of a picture (both analog and digital). Thus, by their very definition, they are broader than Balcerzan's *visualisms*.

The scope of the term *photo-grapheme* is not limited by directly expressed references (including those which are characterized by ekphrasis, especially clear in the case of texts referring to this medium already in their titles), or by using specific imagery related to photography (referring to the way of cropping the image or the game between the presence and absence of the photographed figure). Photo-graphemes can be found in all layers of a text (not to say: in all Ingarden's layers of a text) – also in those connected with its formal shape. They can emphasize the individual features of a photograph or a whole group of features, also combining terms which would seem to contradict each other.

However, not all photo-graphemes are equally clear. Some of them seem to be obvious already after a cursory reading, such as those which refer directly to specific photographs. Others become visible only during interpretation, being in a way dependent from others, and thus "stronger". This relation is especially clear in the formal layer of a text. For example, using an enjambment is not in itself a photo-grapheme. However, in some cases, when this stylistic device coexists with other, self-evident photo-graphemes, it also becomes one. Hence, I use the term "basic photo-grapheme", which channels the whole interpretation, putting the text in the right "light". Individual photo-graphemes interact with each other, creating networks of dependencies, comprising the photo-graphematicity of a given text.

In the case of Różycki's poem, the basic photo-grapheme appears midway through the second stanza, when photographs are first incorporated into the text. The aim of these photographs is to testify to a personal struggle with the world. What is important, Różycki does not define what exactly they show: there is no detailed information regarding the composition of the photograph or the identity of the people it shows¹⁸. The lack of a clear visual reference to the photograph makes us (according to the directly expressed declaration) see it first of all as a document, not an object that can be aesthetically evaluated. This picture, although it is not directly described, is the only record which could testify to the past. Such a textual presentation of photographs, in which the visual form of the picture is, in a way, put into brackets, paradoxically brings this medium closer to linguistic forms of expression. As Derrida stresses, "The first writing is thus a painted image. [...] The two were at first intermingled: a closed and mute system within which speech had as yet no right of entry and which was shielded from all other symbolic investment"¹⁹. At the same time, an "annulment" of the picture's visibility of a sort, which is conducted here by Różycki, highlights the schematicity of souvenir photos (he seems to be saying that it is so strong that there is no point in providing their literary characteristic).

¹⁸Only in the third stanza is the expression "photographs" (a photo-grapheme) described more precisely as "wedding photos", which – although still not very informative – allows us to understand the photos through some convention.

¹⁹Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 396.

Recognizing oneself in a photograph gives the photographic record a strong identity value, which is almost inscriptive. In the case of this medium, this identity is reduced to the recognition of a face. As noted by Hans Belting in *An Anthropology of Images*, "The analogy of the body and the picture, enhanced by the photography to the body index (Ch. S. Pierce) relied not only on the trust in the reality of the body, but also on the faith that the real body can represent the person whom it embodies"²⁰. Hence the expression "as can be seen from/ photos", which makes us see the photo first of all as one of the strongest possible ways of attesting to the past (becoming somewhat opposite to the human memory, which is unreliable and subjective almost by its definition), and at the same time, it makes the photographs legible signs of human presence, which – as Anna Łebkowska put it, "[...] in their immobility, in their function indicate *this is* and *that was* – they reveal a trace of what is completely beyond capturing"²¹.

The metaphor of a war against the world is interesting in the context of photography as a medium. Its dramatic tension is highlighted not only by using military vocabulary (for instance, "landing operations of dandelion clocks"), but also through the opposition of stability and dynamics, deeply rooted in the photographic vision of the world. Insofar as the vision described in the first stanza (despite some reservations²²) is marked with a natural movement, the appearance of photographs in the poem seems to stop the picture, transforming the text's character from clearly descriptive to an almost philosophical reflection²³ (highlighted by several rhetorical questions). Xavier Farré, while discussing (among others) another poem, *Zapach*, from Różycki's book of poems *Litery*, stressed that:

In Różycki, apart from freezing the image, which would be an example of an *ekphrasis* of a sort, the word sets the blind field in motion and starts living beyond the frame. That is where the reflection upon language is, where the past of the poet and his loved ones are connected, where the whole poetic world exists, where the path to self-determination among what is visible and invisible, among that is defined, and what is theoretically impossible to define²⁴.

The clearly photographic metaphor of frame (which Farré refers to also in the title of the quoted paper), allows for the definition of the literary game between what is available directly and what is hidden in an interpretative gesture. Likewise, in *Las tropikalny*, there is an opposition of motion and motionlessness. As Hans Finsler put it, "Photography is motionlessness. It stops the current of life"²⁵. The experience of this "stopped current" seems to be clearly encoded in this poem. Such a layout of text can also be considered a photo-grapheme.

²⁰Hans Belting, *Antropologia obrazu. Szkice do nauki o obrazie*, trans. Mariusz Bryl (Kraków: Tow. Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych Universitas, 2007), 135. [translation mine, PZ]

²¹Anna Łebkowska, "Fotografia jako empatyczna mediacja," in *Intersemiotyczność: literatura wobec innych sztuk (i odwrotnie)*, ed. Stanisław Balbus, Andrzej Hejmej, and Jakub Niedźwiedź (Kraków: Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych "Universitas," 2004), 126, <http://books.google.com/books?id=EYAZAQAIAAJ>.

²²Also, the first verse of the poem is static. The opening question "When will you dance for me?" seems to be an attempt at setting a stagnate world in motion. The phrases "the summer is over" or "our children grew up" should be read in the same way, as they express the awareness of some *przesilenie*, *tożsame* with (to follow Różycki's rhetoric) the autumn of life.

²³The line of this division obviously belongs to the genre characteristic of a sonnet.

²⁴Xavier Farré, "Kilka kadrów z wierszy Tomasza Różyckiego," in *Obroty liter: Szkice o twórczości Tomasza Różyckiego*, ed. Anna Czabanowska-Wróbel and Magdalena Rabizo-Birek (Kraków: Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych UNIVERSITAS, 2019), 115.

²⁵Hans Finsler, *Das Bild der Photographie* (Zurich: Conzett & Huber, 1964), 2–54. [translation mine, PZ]

The contradistinction of motion and motionlessness is related to the registered passage of time, and, as such, of evanescence. The war described by Różycki is a part of this issue, which takes the form of the daily fight with time (in which – as Wisława Szymborska wrote – „śmierć / zawsze o tę chwilę przybywa spóźniona”²⁶). In *Las tropikalny*, this has both existential and generational dimensions. Although the division into two “sides” of a conflict seems to be clear, there is an obvious paradox to it: “a war with the world/ we were waging again, [...] being on the world’s side”. The passage of time would be the change dividing the two ways of seeing reality, registered in a photograph; forcing one to take the side of young rebels only to set the rules for younger generations. The irreversible loss of youth is one of the major topics in *Kolonie*. „Zakopaliśmy nasze dzieciństwo / to już kwestia religii”²⁷, as he wrote in *Przylądek Horn* from the same book of poems. The title of the book of poems refers not only to faraway countries or the process of gaining new territories, but also to traveling on a micro scale, characteristic for childhood²⁸. The photographs which appear in *Las tropikalny* may testify to it.

Roland Barthes in his famous *Camera Lucida* wrote: “Each act of reading a photograph, and we have billions of them every day all around the world, each act of taking and reading a picture is a direct and suppressed contact with what is no more, i.e. death”²⁹. The problem of evanescence is also expressed *explicite* by asking “Are you affected/ by time?”. This sentence can be understood not only as a way of raising an existential question, but also as a photo-grapheme based on relating to the experience of communing³⁰ with a copy of a photograph. A slightly oxymoronic expression „the touch of time” would be the same as the touch of a person examining their own photos after many years³¹. This process – deeply rooted in the somatic experience – would have to be treated as analogous with the eyes meeting of the person watching a photo and the person that photo presents, as described by Barthes.

At the same time, this photo-grapheme introduces an aspect of materiality and a photographic picture, ascribed to a paper copy, but reduced in the case of digital reproduction techniques. In *Fotografia. Forma życia jako żałoby*, Marcela Kościańczuk interprets Barthes’s understanding of a strong relation between the physicality of a picture with the somatics of human existence, and at the same time the experience of death:

The form, i.e. the body of a photo, indicates, denotes one’s own frailty, fragility, imperfection. It proclaims its own emptiness, constantly prophesies the failure in the realization of the subject’s

²⁶ Wisława Szymborska, “O śmierci bez przesady,” in *Widok z ziarnkiem piasku: 102 wiersze* (Kraków: Wydawn. a5, 2002), 107–8. “Death/ is always a moment late” [translation mine, PZ]

²⁷ Tomasz Różycki, “Przylądek Horn,” in *Kolonie* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Znak, 2007), 12. “We buried our childhood/ it is a question of religion” [translation mine, PZ]

²⁸ Such poems from *Kolonie* as *Rajska plaża*, *Węgorze elektryczne*, *Przylądek Horn* and many others indicate this interpretation. See M. Drzęzła, *op. cit.*

²⁹ Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (New York: The Noonday Press, 2012), 83. [translation mine, PZ].

³⁰ An element of “strangeness”, clearly highlighted by Różycki, is immanently hidden in this expression.

³¹ “Dotykam twojego zdjęcia. Przykładam je do czoła jak jasnowidz / tropiący ciała zaginionych.” (“I am touching your photograph. I press it against my forehead like a clairvoyant/ searching for the bodies of missing persons” — as Mariusz Więcek wrote in a text referring to a similar experience. Mariusz Więcek, “Robię Ci zoom i zachwycam się,” in *Equilibrium* (Sopot: Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Sopotu, 2009), 49.

longevity. At the same time a photograph announces its death, becomes an omen of the inevitable, perhaps – paradoxically – getting some more vital energy in this way. The reader who rebels against death – or quite to the opposite, one that accepts the end foreshadowed by bodily transformations or the deadness of a photograph, has a chance to appreciate the transition moment expressing the dynamics of vitality and recognizable only when confronted with the consistency of an object³².

Różycki's clear photo-graphemic juxtaposition of an image's motionlessness recorded in a photograph with the dynamic natural world seems to have a similar value.

The transformations taking place on the surface of a photograph are also significant: "From one photo to another, is not by any chance/ some minor detail disappearing? And eventually/ will there only be the backdrop left?". The photo-graphemic record of the fading process not only refers to the technical problem regarding the loss of details, but it is also a handy metaphor of the human memory, in which individual faces or events gradually disappear. The "writing" of a photography seems to be unreliable, and the symbols of which an image consists blur. The Derridean trace of the human presence is only slightly more permanent than this presence. The loss of a photo is also painful because it is the only object which could testify to the events that it recorded.

In the case of *Las tropikalny*, the fading process goes beyond the scope of one photograph. Różycki clearly presents a series of photos here, each separated from the others by some amount of time. From one photo to another, the image of the photographed person is transferred, undergoing stronger and stronger transformations, stemming from the inevitability of the transience process. Subsequent photos, as in a time-lapse movie, document not only weddings and funerals, but also, predominantly, the ageing of the human face, the changes it undergoes (coexisting with those that take place on the surface of the photograph). The process of "transmitting" the image from one photo to another – being almost a photo-copy – causes a systematic loss of details and nuances, which blur with each attempt at recording them. "And eventually/ will there only be the backdrop left?", Różycki asks. An empty photo, showing just a backdrop³³, becomes an extremely telling testament of human evanescence.

The "minor detail" which Różycki asks about, which is gradually more blurred in each subsequent copy, would be the most important element of the photographic record. After all, it is the only sign to which the author directly pays attention. However, he refers to features which are not defined in the text, functioning in Barthes's "third sense"³⁴. This symbol, escaping its own original context, puncturing like a *punctum*, would contain the essence of human identity.

³²Marcela Kościńczuk, "Fotografia. Forma życia jako żałoby," in *Imperium Rolanda Barthes'a*, ed. Anna Grzegorzczak et al. (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu im. Adama Mickiewicza, 2016), 266.

³³The empty backdrop (a photo-grapheme) clearly refers to many artistic projects which describe human evanescence in a similar way – such as a photographic series by Ken Griffiths, showing the same couple in front of a house over many years.

³⁴See for example Dziadek, *Obrazy i wiersze*, 190.

In *L'excès du visible*, Edouard Pontremoli wrote: "In order to approach the understanding of the essence of photography, we need to accept the photographic value as unclear, since this graphy is not realized with a free human hand"³⁵. In the mechanical process of creating an image, the human "hand" (which indeed would be difficult to define as "free") indeed seems to play only a secondary role³⁶. However, this does not mean that the process of copying a photograph is completely technical. Photographs, which are the basic photo-graphemes of the third stanza (contained in the phrase "Taken in full sunlight/ wedding photos"), are also clearly imperfect; not only because of the gradual fading of the image, but also because they were taken by a man. The rookie mistake of taking a photo in full sunlight causes a partial loss of the recorded image; some signs which should be contained in the photo are lost forever.

The photographic record which appears in Różycki's poem seems to be marked with emptiness in many respects: be it due to overexposure (which happened at the very moment of recording the photo), or due to the transience of photos, or the blurring of photographed figures. The photograph becomes branded with absence – like in another poem from *Kolonie*, in which we read: "Stare filmy i zdjęcia, pełna ich jest pustka, / i szafa i szuflada"³⁷. This game of presence and absence, immanently inscribed into the notion of photography, gains its new counterpart in the final verses of *Las tropikalny*:

[...] Champagne breakfast took place
and will take place tomorrow as well, although empty
are all the bottles with bad wine and at the bottom of a glass
there is always something left, some grounds, love

Empty wine bottles seem to be the same souvenirs of past events as the imperfect photos.

In her famous book *On Photography*, Susan Sontag wrote:

Poetry's commitment to concreteness and to the autonomy of the poem's language parallels photography's commitment to pure seeing. Both imply discontinuity, disarticulated forms and compensatory unity: wrenching things from their context (to see them in a fresh way), bringing things together elliptically, according to the imperious but often arbitrary demands of subjectivity.³⁸

The method of constructing literary pictures in Różycki's poem should be treated in the same way. The objects which he lists in the final verse are taken out of their context, like in the cropping process, directing the recipient towards (seemingly irrelevant) details. The "subjective cri-

³⁵Edouard Pontremoli, *Nadmiar widzialnego fenomenologiczna interpretacja fotogeniczności*, trans. Marian Leon Kalinowski (Gdańsk: Wydawn. Słowo, Obraz Terytoria, 2006), 9. [translation mine, PZ]

³⁶While taking a photo the human hand-sets in motion numerous physical, chemical and information (in the case of digital photography) processes. To put it simply, in the case of an automated creation the details of individual hand movements do not really influence the photograph (although an amateur hand can "ruin" a photo, for example by making it blurred). This method of creation seems to be remote from drawing or painting, where each gesture, the direction of the strokes, as well as how hard the pencil is pressed against the paper, the angle, etc. are all directly reflected.

³⁷Tomasz Różycki, "Ziemia ognista," in *Kolonie* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Znak, 2007), 46. "Old films and photos, the emptiness is full of them, / and the closet, and the drawer." [translation mine, PZ]

³⁸Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Picador, 2005), 83.

teria of seeing the world" would also include the use of enjambment – analogous to the "clean cut" cropped photograph. Such a way of constructing a poem (although obviously observable also in texts which do not refer to photography) would also be considered to be a photo-grapheme in this context – understood as the meeting point between two neighboring media. The snapshot-like character of images in the first stanza should be interpreted in the same way.

Objects which – as if with the use of a photographic ZOOM – Różycki points out are supposed to prove that the loss of meaning of life inscribed into the final verse of the poem cannot be complete; "there is always something left". In *Nie bez reszty* Tadeusz Sławek asks "What is 'the rest'? [...] Let's say what «the rest» is not. Suggestion number one: it is not what we push away from ourselves as unimportant, what lies beyond the scope of our interests"³⁹. The rudimentariness of "the rest" clearly (and somewhat paradoxically) relates to – as highlighter by Sławek – the metaphor of a garbage dump, where objects which are in a situation of "transition, transit"⁴⁰ end up. In Różycki's poem, grounds, garbage, shreds of emotions, distant echoes of past events become "the rest" – making it possible to reminisce. Listing love among all those things highlights the significance of this feeling in an ironic way.

Taking into account this context, let us go back to Tadeusz Sławek, who finished his book *Nie bez reszty* with the following conclusion:

The memory inevitably comes back, but this is no longer the memory which I manage. It does not have the character of an archive, from which we can freely, always retrieve a given document of a memory. I must admit that this is not *my* memory – which is only a step away from admitting that it has its own mechanisms and longings, which will not subordinate to my wishes⁴¹.

This memory is in a way autonomous, free from the human will. It is very often set in motion by old photographs, "puncturing" Barthes's *punctum*. A very similar mechanism makes it possible that "champagne breakfast took place/ and will take place tomorrow as well", whereas time, measured by the rhythm of subsequent analogous events, seems to go around in circles. Photo-graphemic poems are mostly a textual record of such experiences.

Photo-graphemicality should be regarded as a group of traits functioning on different textual levels. However, introducing the medium of photography into literature does not always have a form of a direct reference. In *Las tropikalny*, apart from such references, there is also a number of photo-graphemes, which allow for the extraction of the features of this medium and the transmission of it on the poetic ground – from the "touch of time" metaphor inscribed in them, to the construction of the poem, highlighting the issue of motion and motionlessness, or the functioning of a photo frame. Without pointing them out, it is difficult to fully reconstruct the relationships connecting literature with photography.

translated by Małgorzata Olsza

³⁹Tadeusz Sławek, *Nie bez reszty: o potrzebie niekompletności* (Mikołów: Instytut Mikołowski, 2018), 5.

⁴⁰Sławek, 200.

⁴¹Sławek, 202.

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ABSTRACT:

The paper is an attempt at analyzing the intertextual relations between literature and photography. In order to extract them, the notions of textual “photo-graphemicality” (understood as a number of features indicating similarities between a text and a photograph) and “photo-grapheme” (their individual textual realization), inspired by Derridean “grammatological” categories. Their functioning in a poetic text is presented using the example of *Las tropikalny* by Tomasz Różycki.

Polish literature

poetry

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From a Look in the Mirror to Photographs on Instagram (Anna Świrszczyńska – – Grzegorz Uzdanski – – an Insta Lie)

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In 1988, Anne Dumas conducted an interesting social experiment. Dumas showed two groups of graduate students, one from China and the other one from the United States, a photograph of a man dressed in a business suit, eating breakfast next to a window with a view of a modern city. The company's name and all textual information have been removed from this image, which has often been used in advertising in the US. The responses of the two groups differed quite significantly. American students said that the image evokes power and wealth, while Chinese students asked why a middle-aged man is eating breakfast alone, without a family.¹ Paul Messaris, who uses the example of Dumas's experiment in his article, comments thusly on the results of the study:

[The study] demonstrate[s] the potential consequences of an intriguing aspect of visual literacy, involving familiarity with specific images or sets of images that have played a role in a particular culture's visual heritage (...).²

Three decades later, when we have a more in-depth theoretical perspective provided by cul-

¹ Paul Messaris, "Visual Literacy and Visual Culture," in *Imagery and Visual Literacy: Selected Readings*, ed. Darrell G Beauchamp, Roberts A Braden, and Robert E Griffin (Blacksburg: International Visual Literacy Association, 1995), 51.

² Messaris, 51.

tural studies and postcolonial studies, as well as by a more practical experience of multiculturalism, the difference between respondents is not as surprising as at the time of the study. Indeed, I am not so much interested in intercultural communication; my basic assumption is that today, media narratives (including visual narratives) influence the manner in which interpretations of literary texts are modeled. I would like to discuss intertextual connections, which go beyond the traditionally understood concept of intertextuality, by referring to the examples of Anna Świrszczyńska's poem *Grube jelito*³ [*Large intestine*], the poem *Instagram*⁴ (a pastiche of Świrszczyńska's poem by Grzegorz Uzdanski, the author of the Facebook page *Nowe wiersze sławnych poetów* [New poems by famous poets]) and the video *Are You Living an Insta Lie? Social Media vs. Reality*.⁵

I will read these media texts in a reverse order, i.e. beginning with the video illustrating the mechanisms of social media and ending with Świrszczyńska's poem. Such an achronological analysis will allow me to further investigate the impact of context on the interpreted texts.

Visual context

The title of the film contains a clear thesis which governs the narrative. Building one's image on social media is referred to as an "Insta lie," making the viewer evaluate this phenomenon negatively (i.e. come to the conclusion that social media falsify reality). Moreover, the creators' axiological position is confirmed by the definition which accompanies the video. It defines an "Insta lie" as "an intentionally false representation of real life on social media." The creators supplement this definition with examples, which include tagging selfies (the reception of visual material is profiled by the selection of keywords), taking hundreds of photographs before you choose one that is supposed to be "natural," taking shots which suggest that you love your job, or using filters to make your travel photos look "amazing" (i.e. unreal).

The story that illustrates the problem (and at the same time conveys a clear moral) was constructed as a series of seemingly unrelated images. Each post motivates other people to act, giving rise to a network of not only "viewers", but also "creators." Young people who are online all the time and everywhere embody the idea of Web 2.0 (based on user-generated content, content sharing, mainly through mobile devices,⁶ and trust in materials available online). However, the video shows almost exclusively the negative aspects of this phenomenon and the anticipated social consequences: atomization, loss of traditional interpersonal relationships, loneliness, or low self-esteem. In this context, the adjective "social" is ironic, because instead of unifying the "image of reality," the media break it down and fragment it.

³ Anna Świrszczyńska, "Grube jelito," in *Jestem baba* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1975), 223.

⁴ The poem was also published in *Przekrój*: Grzegorz Uzdanski, "Anna Świrszczyńska „Instagram”," *Kwartalnik Przekrój*, accessed October 20, 2019, <https://przekroj.pl/kultura/anna-swirszczynska-instagram-grzegorz-uzdanski>.

⁵ The clip is available on YouTube at: *Are You Living an Insta Lie? Social Media Vs. Reality*, accessed October 20, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0EFHbruKEmw>.

⁶ It is worth adding that Web 2.0 is an intermediate stage between the initial phase called Web 1.0 (based on one-way interaction, i.e. receiving ready-made content created by selected persons) and the idea of Web 3.0 (the Internet of Things based on the development of artificial intelligence systems; it also involves creating a "semantic web" and connecting as many objects, services, or even interpersonal relationships as possible).

Are You Living an Insta Lie?, which is meant to elicit intermedial interpretation, provokes questions about visibility and the systems it creates. In her review of various approaches to visibility, Roma Sendyka draws on the concept of Lisa Cartwright and Marita Sturken, who define visibility as “a state of being visible. It is often believed, Cartwright and Sturken write, (...) that visibility characterizes our era due to the growing dominance of visual representations in the media and everyday life. (...) Visibility concerns the ways of perceiving everyday objects: people and things, and not just what we are used to thinking of as a visual text.”⁷ This quote takes on another meaning when we realize that 15 years ago, when it was formulated, Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter had just begun to operate (respectively: 2004, 2005 and 2006), and Instagram was yet to be invented (2010). Today, after just a decade, we perceive visual and media systems differently,⁸ because we are aware of the scale of the phenomenon, the technical possibilities offered to average users by publicly available devices and applications, and the psychological and cultural threats posed by the rapidly-changing media landscape.

“Scopic regime” is one useful term that can be used to describe the relationships between social media and visibility. Originally coined by Christian Metz (1982), it was later adopted by Martin Jay. A scopic regime is “a strategy, a rhetoric of seeing (what can be seen, how something can be seen, what must be seen/what must not be seen). Scopic regimes (paradigms of vision) concern culturally specific ways of seeing, and they replace the traditional definition of “seeing” as a universal and primary phenomenon. When viewed in this context, the ways of seeing are not natural, but conventional; they are characterized by certain dynamics of change; they also differ in a synchronic approach and dismantle the traditional definition of “seeing” as universal, regardless of culture, gender, race, and time in history.”⁹ The rhetoric of seeing conditioned by Instagram consists in constant revealing and hiding, which creates the social identity of the viewer who previously programmed the perception of his image. The viewer knows how, and on the basis of what criteria, he evaluates others; as a result, he has his assumptions about how he will be judged. The paradigm of seeing is a kind of closed circuit: I show what the audience wants to see, and I am rewarded for it. I also reward others if they fit into the pattern of what should be shown.

Naturally, we should also take into consideration the technique of representation, which influences the viewer’s assessment. All responses to the video (posts and Internet reviews) ignore the difference between Instagram as a platform and the dynamic representation of multimedia material it offers:

“Check out our latest video below to reveal the truth behind the photos you see online.”¹⁰

⁷ Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright, *Practices of Looking: An Introduction to Visual Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005); quote after: Roma Sendyka, “Poetyki wizualności,” in *Kulturowa teoria literatury. 2, Poetyki, problematyki, interpretacje*, ed. Ryszard Nycz and Teresa Walas (Kraków: Universitas, 2012), 139.

⁸ In January 2019, the agencies We Are Social and Hootsuite published the Digital 2019 report which shows that 98% of all Internet users use social media. Time spent on social media equals to one-third of total Internet time. Interestingly, one user has on average 9 social media accounts: “Digital 2019: Global Internet Use Accelerates,” We Are Social, accessed October 21, 2019, <https://wearesocial.com/blog/2019/01/digital-2019-global-internet-use-accelerates>.

⁹ Quote after: Sendyka, “Poetyki wizualności,” 158.

¹⁰ Description posted by the filmmakers on the Ditch the Label website. Ditch the label is a group of creators and educators who wish to raise awareness about social media: “Are You Living an Insta Lie?,” Ditch the Label, accessed October 21, 2019, <https://www.ditchthelabel.org/living-insta-lie/>.

“What you see on your feed is from the highlight of someone’s day. From that, you see the best moment, then the best picture they took, which is edited and filtered. We’re all just going through our day and posting our highlights – and then we’re comparing ourselves with each others’ highlights.”¹¹

“The video highlights how the ‘perfect’ lives seen in social media photos are often faked and completely different from the person’s reality. Users can appear to be living lavish, ‘perfect’ lives, but in reality, they are often mundane like everybody else.”¹²

Paradoxically, by warning the youth about the dangers of living an Insta Lie, commentators falsely equate the video and the virtual world with reality. The video becomes a “real” warning: the interpreters neutralize its structural elements (acting, plot, dissolving images, editing, music) to prove their point. The entire process may remind us of Barthes’s concept of mythologies, in which new meanings are added to the original sign (they “cover up” previous meanings, naturalize history, and conceal their ideological background). Direct eye contact gives way to the vision of life in frames, but *Are You Living an Insta Lie ...?* does not show the viewer how to return to the “natural” state. Instead, it presents a different model of mediated criticism. Piotr Celiński argues that naturalization is a process in which the difference between “images which reflect, transport reality (film, photography, photos) and images which represent ‘variations’ of reality (electronic art, non-electronic art translated into digital code)”¹³ is obliterated. The latter, Celiński adds, “are all just projections (...) which combine disparate elements (...)”¹⁴ Indeed, today, we face the problem of blurring the border between images which “transport” reality and images which represent its variations. Additionally, we have problems with understanding the logic behind selecting and combining different elements.

Recontextualisation

In *Approaching dialogue*, Per Linell defines recontextualization as follows:

Recontextualization may be defined as the dynamic transfer-and-transformation of something from one discourse/text-in-context (the context being in reality a matrix or field of contexts) to another. (...) When parts of texts or discourses are relocated through recontextualization, they are often subject to textual change, such as simplification, condensation, elaboration and refocusing (...).¹⁵

Having discussed selected aspects of Instagram’s multimedia visuality, including shifts within the digital discourse, I would like to discuss the pastiche of Anna Świrszczyńska’s poem by Grzegorz Uzdanski:

¹¹Jennifer Kim, “Are You Living An Insta Lie?,” The Odyssey Online, accessed October 21, 2019, <https://www.theodysseyonline.com/living-lie-on-instagram>.

¹²Will Nicholls, “Instagram vs. Reality: How People Lie About Their Lives with Photos,” accessed October 21, 2019, <https://petapixel.com/2017/07/28/instagram-vs-reality-video-shows-people-lie-life-photos/>.

¹³Piotr Celiński, “Interfejsy mediów cyfrowych: dalsza emancypacja obrazów czy szansa na ich zdetrinizowanie?,” *Annales Universitatis Mariae Curie-Skłodowska. Sectio K, Politologia*. 13 (2006): 127.

¹⁴Celiński, 127.

¹⁵Per Linell, *Approaching Dialogue: Talk, Interaction and Contexts in Dialogical Perspectives* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Pub. Co., 2001), 154–55.

Grzegorz Uzdański, *Instagram*

Wrzucam na Instagrama
swoje zdjęcie.

Patrz, jaka brzydka,
mówi zdjęcie.

Nie masz już światła w oczach,
ani ciepła we krwi.

Prosisz świat o litość,
to się mu nie spodoba.

Te zmarszczki, ten przykry smutek,
zrób coś, mówi zdjęcie.

Dodaję filtr Aden
(brzmi prawie jak Eden).

Wzmacniam
kolor i jasność,
na zmarszczkach rozmywam kontury.

Zdjęcie
nic już nie mówi.
Gotowe.

Grzegorz Uzdański, *Instagram*

I post my photo
on Instagram.

See how ugly she is,
the photo says.

Your eyes are devoid of light
and your blood is cold.

You ask the world for mercy
and it won't like it.

The wrinkles, the painful sadness,
do something, the photo says.

I apply the Aden filter
(it sounds almost like Eden).

I enhance
color and light,
I blur the wrinkles.

The photo
does not say anything anymore.
Done.¹

Investigating “what the photo says” seems to be the most obvious interpretive strategy. In such a reading, Uzdański’s poem resembles the warning issued by *Are You Living an Insta Lie?*: the world of images controls your life; you are constantly evaluated; under the guise of establishing interpersonal relationships, the digital world leads to alienation and low self-esteem. The “I” speaks, informing the reader about her decision, only in the first couplet. In the following couplets, the photo “speaks” (it gives the reader the impression that the comments are actually made by potential followers). In reality, however, a more complicated process is taking place in the poem. Similarly to *Are You Living an Insta Lie?*, in Uzdański’s poem we are witnessing the moment of editing.

The in-betweenness of this moment is strictly connected with identity: I am already a “non-self” (the photograph has already been taken and it speaks; it has gained some kind of autonomy), but I want to be even more “non-self” (the photograph needs to be altered so that it can meet some idealized criteria of “beauty”). This division of the self corresponds to the two parts of the poem: accusation and attempted intervention. The subject responds to imaginary accusations, which are at the same time a projection of the subject’s personal issues and negative body image, and decides to act. However, the action taken does not lead to

real (psychological, spiritual or even physical) change, but boils down to altering the image. It should be emphasized that the photo comments not only on appearance (wrinkles, eyes that are “devoid of light”), but also on internal states. The lyrical I’s blood is cold, which, in turn, leads to “the painful sadness.” And no one should be sad in a culture that demands constant joy and expects everyone to love their bodies.¹⁶ From negative body image, through direct references to biblical banishment from the Garden of Eden (replaced with the Instagram filter), the lyrical “I” leads us to the ironic finale in which “done” may refer to both relief and resignation.

At what level can we compare *Are You Living an Insta Lie?* and Uzdański’s poem? To what extent can literary scholars comment on the psychological consequences of using social media, cultural changes in body image, and self-aggrandizing techniques? On the one hand, what counts is the referential value of the literary text, the manner in which it talks about the real world, which is why we have to engage with these phenomena directly. On the other hand, we should also pay attention to intertextual techniques and the manner in which they have changed the digital environment. They are no longer limited to the text-text or text-image relations but involve a series of multimedia texts which are arranged *ex post facto*. Recontextualization does not as much change the context as it creates a context with a specific goal in mind. Tomasz Mizerkiewicz makes a similar point when he writes that new poetics should provoke literary experiences and not simply describe them:

The production of new poetics knowledge often takes place as a direct result of text-producing activities, operations performed on the work, playing with it, or exercises inspired by it. We may wish to go so far as to state that the part of poetics knowledge that is worth developing or revealing is discrete knowledge in the sense used by Michel de Certeau, the scholar who developed a theory of the practice of everyday life. We could then conceptually grasp the sphere of literary inventiveness as a little-known poetics present in extremely widespread practices of writing submerged in everyday life, inventive and equal to philology in its autonomy.¹⁷

Uzdański’s pastiche is successful, because it brings together seemingly distant worlds of modern virtual reality and Anna Świrszczyńska’s sensual poetry. To recapitulate, when we compare the poem, the video, and the social networking site, we can see that they present interpersonal relations as superficial: people are mostly concerned with judging one another. The subject lacks autonomy and appears to be dependent on the decisions and opinions of others (outer containment). The motto of the subject is, “You ask the world for mercy and it won’t

¹⁶The report *#StatusOfMind. Social media and young people’s mental health and wellbeing* from the Royal Society for Public Health reads: “There are 10 million new photographs uploaded to Facebook alone every hour, providing an almost endless potential for young women to be drawn into appearance-based comparisons whilst online. Studies have shown that when young girls and women in their teens and early twenties view Facebook for only a short period of time, body image concerns are higher compared to non-users. One study also demonstrated girls expressing a heightened desire to change their appearance such as face, hair and/or skin after spending time on Facebook. Others have suggested social media is behind a rise in younger generations opting to have cosmetic surgery to look better in photos, which has implications for physical health through unnecessary invasive surgery. Around 70% of 18-24 years olds would consider having a cosmetic surgical procedure.” Source: “#StatusofMind,” accessed October 21, 2019, <https://www.rsph.org.uk/our-work/campaigns/status-of-mind.html>.

¹⁷Tomasz Mizerkiewicz, “New Situations of Poetics,” *Forum Poetyki*, no. 1 (lato 2015): 22.

like it.” The central somatic theme oscillates around the body as an image that is subjected to simplistic evaluation (pretty/ugly, attractive/repulsive). How does Świrszczyńska’s poem function in these contexts?

Source text

Agnieszka Czyżak writes:

Corporeality as a sphere in which poetry is born, constantly reveals (...) (in the space of everyday life) its fragility and susceptibility to destruction. In Świrszczyńska’s late works, we witness a rebellion against the matter, doomed to decay, doomed to end human existence in the world. While Świrszczyńska employs sarcasm, mockery, and ironic distance, she nevertheless recognizes that despair is a very painful experience.¹⁸

Czyżak aptly describes the essence of Świrszczyńska’s poetry; other literary critics describe it in similar terms. Rebellion against and fear of the changing and aging body mixed with existential reflection is expressed by means of a simple language that does not shy away from irony. In my reading of Świrszczyńska’s poem *Large intestine*, I would like to verify such critical observations and comment on the role visuality plays in interpretation.

Anna Świrszczyńska, *Grube jelito*

Spójrz w lustro, spojrzymy oboje.
To moje nagie ciało.
Ty podobno je lubisz,
ja nie mam powodu.
Kto nas związał, mnie i moje ciało?
Dlaczego muszę umrzeć
razem z nim?
Mam prawo wiedzieć, gdzie biegnie granica
między nami.
Gdzie jestem ja, ja sama, sama.

Anna Świrszczyńska, *Large intestine*

Look in the mirror, let’s both look.
This is my naked body.
You supposedly like it,
I have no reason to like it.
Who bound us, me and my body?
Why do I have to die
with it?
I have the right to know where the border
between us is.
Where I am, just me, alone.²

The shared somatic “element” may be identified at the level of content. The body, but also, above all else, the consequences of examining it, is analyzed. Seemingly, the situation described in the poem is similar to the story presented in *Are You Living an Insta Lie?* The phrases “let’s both look” and “You supposedly like it” refer to the external observer (probably a man).¹⁹

¹⁸Agnieszka Czyżak, “Poetki wobec przemijania,” in *Formy (nie)obecności: szkice o współczesnej poezji kobiet*, ed. Joanna Grądział-Wójcik, Agnieszka Kwiatkowska, and Edyta Sołtys-Lewandowska (Kraków: Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych UNIVERSITAS, 2018), 154.

¹⁹Renata Ingbrant argues that in *Jestem baba, Large intestine* features in a section in which “the first person narration dominates; the woman speaks in her own voice, destabilizing the hegemony of the male point of view. She frees femininity from the norms and restrictions imposed by culture. Świrszczyńska’s lyrical ‘I’ is aware of the fact that in the eyes of a man she appears as a false reflection in the mirror.” Renata Ingbrant, “Kobiety antyświat w poezji Anny Świrszczyńskiej,” in *Formy (nie)obecności: szkice o współczesnej poezji kobiet*, ed. Joanna Grądział-Wójcik, Agnieszka Kwiatkowska, and Edyta Sołtys-Lewandowska (Kraków: Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych UNIVERSITAS, 2018), 267.

However, the lyrical I and the external observer do not look at the body together for a long time – the female subject quickly becomes the dominant voice. The people presented in *Are You Living an Insta Lie?* and the lyrical I in Uzdański's poem were not really in touch with themselves, while the subject in Świrszczyńska's poem turns out to be strong enough to confront difficult questions. Even if these questions lead to an existential crisis, they testify to self-awareness and, to use a psychological concept, inner containment of the subject. The sentence "You supposedly like it,/ I have no reason to like it" stands in direct opposition to the couplet "You ask the world for mercy/ and it won't like it." In Uzdański's poem, low self-esteem is associated with external observers, while in Świrszczyńska's poem it is the subject who judges herself harshly, even despite the support expressed by the (probably male) external observer. The image of the body in the mirror (the analog form of the reflection also plays a role here!) is connected with, as in many Świrszczyńska's works, the mind and the spirit. When the woman says, "I have the right to know where the border between us is," we do not know whether she questions the unity between *soma* and *psyche* (which is more probable), or simply wants to find out where the boundary between the viewer and the object he or she sees is. The subject ultimately asks, "Where I am, just me, alone." The drama, the doubt, the identity crisis – the poem does not end with the simple "Done", as was the case in Uzdański's work, demonstrating how the subject searches for boundaries and strives for self-determination.²⁰ Świrszczyńska asks questions about the self and about loneliness in the world, and such topics are not really discussed in social media (they are by definition social; however, in reality, they generate loneliness). Monika Rudaś-Grodzka writes:

[Świrszczyńska, MT] questions the experience of being a person, which is, in turn, linked with experiencing the body and the self. The subject cannot determine the boundary between the self and the body and feels detached from her body. Traditionally, such experiences have helped us navigate our way through the world, but they make Świrszczyńska feel strange and out of touch with herself. Identity becomes a task, a project, that the poet writes for herself in her poetry. Świrszczyńska persistently repeats that she is not what she is and that she must do something about it.²¹

Does Świrszczyńska's approach differ from the vision of the self as presented in social media? After all, we could say that change, and not stasis, is important in social media. They also treat identity as a project and the image of the self as created in social media may cause a depersonalization disorder. The main difference can be found in the quality of reflection, i.e. the courage to ask complex (psychological, existential, moral) questions. Indeed, Świrszczyńska presents a much more sublime version of intimacy; she is brave, honest, and personal, without being impudent and exhibitionistic.

²⁰Irena Grudzińska-Gross rightly notes that "these poems are ruthless, because they are devoid of sentimentality. They are painfully sincere, but they do not demand compassion or pity from the reader, even though the poetess expresses compassion and pity." Irena Grudzińska-Gross, "Książka jak uderzenie," *Dwutygodnik.com*, accessed October 21, 2019, <https://www.dwutygodnik.com/artukul/4641-ksiazka-jak-uderzenie.html>.

²¹Monika Rudaś-Grodzka, "Parthenogeneza w okresie menopauzy," *Teksty Drugie* 2002, no. 6 (2002): 71.

Intertextuality à rebours

In conclusion, let me explain the rationale behind my comparative analysis and the order in which I have discussed my examples. The traditional intertextual reading follows the order: from the original text to the intertext/intertextual series. This order is closely connected with the acquisition of reading competences in the traditional (though still very popular) educational model, in which we study texts from the older to the most contemporary (as if we were adding new elements to the corpus). The time in which a given work was created and the need to analyze the older text first determine the historical relationship between older and newer elements. Older elements are prototypes, hypotexts, presuppositions; they consciously or unconsciously reference fragments of texts from the past. All of them, however, are largely dependent on the alleged authorial intention.

My ahistorical reading, in which I have consciously referenced “intertexts” which the author did not know, has been governed by a different logic. First of all, in my interpretation, the reader/interpreter focuses on the problem approach rather than the structural approach. The shared mode of thinking (subject to historical circumstances) is more interesting to him/her than tracing borrowed sentences, imitated images, or paraphrased content. Secondly, today, we acquire visual competences before we acquire textual competences. Therefore, more contemporary texts of culture become reference points for older texts, because we read/view/discover them first. A person who grew up and is a product of visual culture will not read texts in the same way as a person who grew up in and is a product of written/print culture. Indeed, interpretations in which audiovisual suggestions come first are also governed by this logic. When we compare/contrast the same message expressed in different media, we can fully assess to what extent a given cultural phenomenon undergoes changes or finds its further articulation.

translated by Małgorzata Olsza

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KEYWORDS

INSTAGRAM

Anna Świrszczyńska

identity

ABSTRACT:

In the article “From a look in the mirror to photographs on Instagram,” I investigate the phenomenon of intermedial interpretation. I compare and contrast a social campaign aimed at young people meant to raise awareness of the perils of Instagram, the pastiche of Anna Świrszczyńska’s poem by Grzegorz Uzdański, and Świrszczyńska’s original poem. I ask questions about different types of reflectivity triggered by different media and artworks which differ generically, historically, and socially. The central issue is the changing role of visibility and the differences in experiencing a given medium. My ahistorical interpretation is motivated by a specific didactic assumption: media images often precede “textual” readings and they often condition their understanding. It is therefore worth exploring the mechanisms of reception of visual images and how they relate to literary structures.

Grzegorz Uzdanski

pastiche

VISUALITY

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Poets, Affects and Common Places:

In Memory of My Feelings Frank O'Hara
and *Cover* Andrzej Sosnowski
from the Perspective of *Mise en Abyme**

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Andrzej Sosnowski is one of the most important and influential modern Polish poets. His work has inspired numerous polemics in the field of literary criticism, focusing first on such topics as postmodernism, the death of an author, or exhausting lyric poetry, and later noticing such issues as subjectivity, postsecularism, politicalness and engagement. Sosnowski was born in 1959. He published his first book of poetry, *Życie na Korei*, in 1992; he has published over a dozen books of poetry, collections of essays and poetic prose, as well as numerous translations (he has translated the work of such authors as Elizabeth Bishop, Roland Firbank, John Ashbery and Arthur Rimbaud) ever since. The translation context is important for interpreting his original works: he often refers to foreign literature, which goes beyond the postmodern textual playfulness.

Much has been written about *Cover* by Sosnowski and its relations with *In Memory Of My Feelings* by Frank O'Hara; the two texts have been analyzed and compared by Tadeusz Pióro,

Ryszard Chłopek, Jacek Gutorow, and Ewa Rajewska¹. The researchers have indicated various characteristics, determinants and conditionings of the cover, highlighting – among other things – the “translation-likeness”, the necessary “borderlandness” (i.e. existing at the intersection of two languages and two poetics), the significant context of postmodernism of this *quasi*-genre, which places the works in question in the context of popular culture and allows for considerations regarding their intertextuality, possible paradoxicality or (deconstructed) category of novelty, replaced by understanding the difference²; as Gutorow puts it, a cover is “work in a new version, a repetition, which is by no means the same”³.

Although the two poems are neither unknown nor absent from literary criticism, it seems that the last word about them has not been said yet. Hence, first of all, one can consider the *mise en abyme* context, essential in the case of works classified as postmodern. From the perspective of metareflection, Sosnowski’s and O’Hara’s poems form an extremely interesting relationship with each other. This relationship is somewhat contrasting – or, to the contrary, paradoxically combining – the permanently discussed construction of a modern subject as an entity to whom one would like to ascribe the supreme function of bonding experiences together, as well as constantly expressing doubts regarding its chances, with postmodern immersion in a text and negating the existence of reality other than the semiotic one. The two poems in question can also be considered from the perspective of their poetics, asking about the eponymous “interpresence” – i.e. how a relationship forms between them. However, this relationship is not based on a dialogue or answers, but rather on a peculiar cooperation. Possible answers to the latter question would stem from the former one: autothematic motifs in *Cover* and *In Memory Of My Feelings* can offer interesting interpretative ideas regarding especially the “derived” text (as long as the old-fashioned translation studies – and not only – rhetoric of original and imitative works, the source and the copy, is present).

The volume and level of complexity of the two poems, each several pages long (and multilayered), and full of cultural and symbolic references obviously exclude the possibility of a thorough analysis over the course of one paper, especially if the study in question were to remain as close to the texts as possible – given that both poems are rather hermetic, and moreover they open up numerous contextual interpretations. Thus, the present paper is limited to a handful of introductory comments, which may inspire another reflection on the two poems and the essential role of autothematic motifs that they include.

¹ See: Tadeusz Pióro, “Czas to biurokracja, którą tworzą wszyscy,” in *Lekcja żywego języka: o poezji Andrzeja Sosnowskiego*, ed. Grzegorz Jankowicz (Kraków: Zielona Sowa : Studium Literacko-Artystyczne przy Instytucie Polonistyki Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 2003); Ryszard Chłopek, “Kogo śmieszy „Cover”?”, in *Lekcja żywego języka: o poezji Andrzeja Sosnowskiego*, ed. Grzegorz Jankowicz (Kraków: Zielona Sowa : Studium Literacko-Artystyczne przy Instytucie Polonistyki Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 2003); Jacek Gutorow, “Kilwater,” in *Urwany ślad: o wierszach Wirpszy, Karpowicza, Różewicza i Sosnowskiego* (Wrocław: Biuro Literackie, 2007); Ewa Rajewska, “Kariera coveru,” in *Kultura w stanie przekładu: translatoologia - komparatystyka - transkulturowość*, ed. Włodzimierz Bolecki and Ewa Kraskowska (Warszawa: Fundacja Akademia Humanistyczna : Instytut Badań Literackich PAN. Wydawnictwo, 2012).

² Rajewska, “Kariera coveru,” 328–29.

³ Gutorow, “Kilwater,” 190.

What would the initial interpretative thesis regarding the general tone of both texts be (assuming that Sosnowski's *Cover* is the cover of O'Hara's *In Memory Of My Feelings*, and so they form a broad relationship of intertextual and inter-linguistic dialogue⁴)? Most likely, the following differentiation would be one of the most obvious proposals: generally speaking, *In Memory Of My Feelings* is devoted to experiencing and subjectivity, as indicated by various subparts of the poem, such as the multiple "naked selves" of the protagonist, out of which each "self" owns its own adventures. The figure of a "serpent" seems especially important here, as the description of its perception and experiences at some point replaces the human perspective (or the perspective of a personified figure described in the lines "my quietness has a man in it, he is transparent"⁵), numerous mentions of specific emotions and states ("Manfred climbs to my nape,/ speaks, but I can't hear him,/ I'm too blue") and a multisensory approach (a description of feelings explained as a sensual reception of warmth and coldness, as well as the structure and materiality of specific objects, like in the verses "though in winter/ they are warm as roses, in the desert/ taste of chilled anisette"). This way of reading O'Hara also stems from the knowledge of his other works, characterized by their immersion in everyday reality, privacy and the specificity of personal experience. Actually, the very title shapes the interpretation of the poem: there is a significant reference to "my feelings" next to the subjective (private or collective) memory. This not only attracts attention to the emotional character of the poem, but also highlights the role of their affiliation with a given figure (man? serpent? the subject of an undefined identity, prone to transformations?). It is worthwhile to also pay attention to the dedication: Grace Hartigan was a famous expressionist painter; this not only supports the "emotional" interpretation of the poem, but also introduces the intersemiotic context, so important for the author⁶.

The initial interpretation of *Cover* looks completely different: the title is enigmatic (unlike in O'Hara's poem, it does not directly refer to the contents of the poem, nor does it suggest whose cover it is, which is highly unusual, both in the popular culture, in which the cover enjoys great popularity, especially in music, and in literature, as evidenced by Gutorow's list of titles which comprises a peculiar corpus of examples of this *quasi-genre*⁷), and it refers only to genealogical, theoretical and semiotic categories. The title of Sosnowski's poem gives no information regarding what it is about (and what it refers to), but rather what it is, shifting the balance point of the analysis from the contents and issues to genre questions, and, as such, textual questions. An explanation regarding the question of what *Cover* covers is provided only towards the end of the poem, which is also rather unusual.

However, the poem reveals the mechanism of its own creation in its tissue, which, aided by its contents, especially by the explicitly metareflective part two, makes it highly autothematic, problematizing both its own existence and the existence of its textual inspiration, its source or reference. In the most general and simplifying understanding, *In Memory of My Feelings* is thus a poem about its subject and his experience, whereas *Cover* is a text

⁴ Rajewska, "Kariera coveru," 328–29.

⁵ All the quotations from O'Hara come from: Frank O'Hara, "In Memory of My Feelings," in *The Collected Poems of Frank O'Hara*, ed. Donald Allen (Berkeley, Calif.: Univ. of California Press, 1995), 252–57.

⁶ See Marjorie Perloff, *Frank O'Hara: Poet among Painters* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1997).

⁷ See Rajewska, "Kariera coveru," 324. Rajewska lists examples that Gutorow gave during literary workshops.

about another text; a text about textuality. This would *par excellence* inspire a dialogue: Sosnowski, a semiotics-centered poet argues with O'Hara, the emotional modernist⁸; thus, Sosnowski remains a "typical" Sosnowski, and O'Hara, a "typical" O'Hara. Therefore, both poems are evidently autothematic – we get not only a perfect confirmation of analytical labels regarding the works of both poets (debunked long ago), but also a clean-cut division of metareflection into one focused on the (creative) subject, and one focused on the (created) product.

The matter is complicated further by the fact that the stereotypical convictions regarding authors have been deconstructed numerous times (among others, Karolina Felberg and Alina Świeściak⁹ have written about Sosnowski as a melancholiac, as well as about subjective and experiential aspects of his work, whereas Pióro's interpretation¹⁰ strongly denies one-sided reading of O'Hara's poem). Although *Cover* is indeed full of references to various literary (and not only literary) texts, most of them are characterized by a rather high level of emotionality. "Chodzę i pytam./ Już trzydzieści lat temu bawiłem, przejazdem w Małkini (...)", and "Chodzę i pytam, brnę/ po uszy w bagnie, żeby odzyskać kotwicę"^{11,12}, are references to the famous phrase by Rafał Wojaczek ("chodzę i pytam: gdzie jest moja szubienica")¹³. This may refer to the poet's suicidal tendencies, as well as to the question about destiny and the meaning of life in general. Excerpts from *Sen o Warszawie* by Czesław Niemen place the issue of attachment to a place (in Sosnowski's version – perhaps the issue of ousting, searching for his "own way"), as well as emotions related to a specific space.

A new, significant picture appears in the fourth part of the poem: the heap of letters of the long poem is compared to a landing operation of potato beetles on a Polish beach ("stonka z miejsca przechodzi do ataku jak wiersze Franka O'Hary./ Co to za poemat, długi jak przemarsz dywizji?/ Patrząc/ i naturalnie w dłoni wyrasta mi butelka z naftą, kiedy ten desant przenika/ faszynowe płotki, wchodzi na wydmy i niknie w głębi łądu za ochronną kosówką/

⁸ Pióro writes about O'Hara's work in the context of modernism, see: Tadeusz Pióro, *Frank O'Hara and the Ends of Modernism* (Warsaw: University of Warsaw. Institute of English Studies, 2013).

⁹ Karolina Felberg, "Melancholia i ekstaza": projekt totalny w twórczości Andrzeja Sosnowskiego (Warszawa: Instytut Badań Literackich PAN, 2010); Alina Świeściak, "Melancholia ponowoczesna. Andrzej Sosnowski," in *Melancholia w poezji polskiej po 1989 roku* (Kraków: Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych Universitas, 2010). Although the complex, heavily criticized issue of subjectivity in this poetry is beyond the scope of the present paper, it should be stressed that this seemingly "postmodernist" work is not free from the intriguing manifestations of "self". I shall focus only on those aspects that can be found on the level of the text in question. Due to the limitations of space, the issue of Sosnowski's modernism and a closer examination of the *mimesis* category are also beyond the scope of this paper.

¹⁰ The researcher observes that O'Hara's writing method is employing the style "I am this, I am that", that "some of the historical events that O'Hara refers to are associated with camp, although most of them – related to politics and military conflicts – occur in the context of various transformations in the history of art and taste", continuing that "in his analysis of the poem Lytle Shaw indicates the preference for copies, characteristic for camp – the original ceases to matter", Tadeusz Pióro, "Czytanie poematów O'Hary," *Literatura na Świecie.*, no. 9–10 (2015): 85. This cools down the frequently "emotional", "barbaric" analyses (or rather – testaments of reception) of O'Hara's poetry, pointing out to its strongly self-conscious (both "subjective" and "literary") tones.

¹¹ All the quotations of *Cover* come from Andrzej Sosnowski, "Cover," in *Dożynki 1987-2003* (Wrocław: Biuro Literackie, 2006), 117–22.

¹² "I have been walking and asking./ I was in Małkinia on my way somewhere else already thirty years ago (...)", and "I am walking and asking, wading/ up to my ears in a swamp, in order to find the anchor" [translation mine, PZ]

¹³ "I am walking and asking: where are my gallows?" [translation mine, PZ]

mrowiem wersów «In Memory of My Feelings»!)¹⁴. Therefore, the marine motif, already introduced with the ship (with which Sosnowski replaces O'Hara's snake), receives an interesting colonial-Americanization context: the United States, with which Sosnowski is fascinated so much, are the homeland of poets, whereas the swarm of verses is parallel to a swarm of insects – an imported element (dropped on the beach by the marines), invading the Polish land. First of all, this makes us understand the ship only if we refer to the cultural symbolism and individual, authorial “topos” (it should be enough to mention Sosnowski's fascination with Rimbaud and the whole book of poetry *Travers*, which moreover collects reprints of earlier editions), and also a peculiar metaphor of a medium between two different spaces, such as two languages. The first part of *Cover* may be some reference to this “mediating” figure: “Kapitan Nemo staje obok mnie/ i coś tłumaczy, ale ja nie słyszę,/ jestem niewytłumaczalny”¹⁵ (which is an exact formal reflection of the already quoted excerpt from O'Hara: “Manfred climbs to my nape (...)”).

Such categories as inexplicability, extirpation, confinement (rendered in *Cover* also with such scenes as the one in which the subject says “czasami bez tlenu/ schodzę w lazurowy odmęt/ i patrzę na świat przez panoramiczne owadzie okno”¹⁶) are placed next to completely different issues: the swarm of the poem's verses refers not only to the invaded home space (or, simply, the overwhelmed subject) with a heap of letters, in which the subject cannot find himself (which is why he keeps losing track, and the poem never comes home), but also to the activity of living creatures. The characters associated with lively insects not only place the issue of unfinished semiosis, but they are also an association with the animal kingdom. Thereby the poem loses its purely textual tone, becoming a peculiar mixture of the centrality of symbols often ascribed to Sosnowski, and affectiveness – characteristic to, among others, O'Hara.

This is also the case with the second part of the poem, in which Sosnowski writes: “Moje dziecko, moje «ja», zdeklasowani klasycyści i klasycy. Mój/ «smutek tropików» beztroski jak wiatr,/ zanim jeszcze wylądowałem na Korei/ pajęcza arabeska pleśni na końcu języka/ pękająca jak siateczka naczyń nośnych/ dla krwi uciekającej na wszystkie strony/ zapisane nieodpowiedzialnymi znakami”¹⁷. The direct reference to the writing process does not immerse the metareflection completely in textual questions (for example, by diluting it to the point when it becomes a string of intertextual references and games), but it places it in the context of “self” – and “my (his) child”, “my sadness of tropics”. Subordinating many elements of the poem (highlighting their belongingness to “me”, even when the “sadness of tropics” refers not to Andrzej Sosnowski, but rather to Claude Lévi-Strauss) empowers

¹⁴“Potato beetles immediately launch an attack, like Frank O'Hara's poems./ What is this poem, long like a division march?/ I am looking/ and a bottle of oil appears in my hand, when this landing operation penetrates/ fascine fences, climbs the sand dunes and disappears deeper into the land behind the alpine zone/ the swarm of the verses of «In Memory of My Feelings»!” [translation mine, PZ]

¹⁵“Captain Nemo climbs to my nape/ speaks, but I do not hear him,/ I am inexplicable” [translation mine, PZ]

¹⁶“Sometimes without oxygen/ I step down into an azure abyss/ and I am watching the world through a panoramic insect window” [translation mine, PZ]

¹⁷“My child, my «self», outclassed classicists and classics. My/ «sadness of tropics» carefree like the wind, /before I landed in Korea/ spider-like arabesque of mold on the tip of my tongue/ fracturing like a network of carrying vessels/ for the blood running in all directions/ recorded in irresponsible letters” [translation mine, PZ]

the poem, making it affective again. The value of the concrete, so significant in O'Hara (perhaps not necessarily in the poem in question, but in a number of other texts, often addressed to the poet's friends, discussing their private relations), brings about the beginning of part five, where we read: "nie chciałbyś tego zrobić, Piotrze?/ Jeszcze tylko kwadrans szkunera./ On płynie tak bardzo daleko./ Sens,/ serce/ arktycznego konwoju, jeśli *to move is to love* (...)"¹⁸. Of course those lines refer to Piotr Sommer, a translator of American poetry, who published the famous book of translated poems by Frank O'Hara (and he published a translation of *In Memory of My Feelings*¹⁹ a dozen or so years later). The quoted verses are characterized by an interesting sentimentality ("it sails so very far"), whereas Piotr's peculiar wish to do "something" is not only an interesting example of thematizing literary life (or the whole literary infrastructure) in the poetic space, but it may also occur as a peculiar "self-explanation".

The previous verses – the ending of part four – go as follows: "Wyglądają na roboli wyobraźni, te chrząszcze,/ i przynoszą mi szum fal, w których zakochałem się jako wisielec"²⁰. The confession that the subject who is searching for his destiny fell in love with the sound of waves (the same waves which are washing onto the beach where marines launched the potato beetles-letters assault), is thus another moment in which the effect is revealed; perhaps it is also a rather simple confession that the subject felt this effect towards the swarm of the verses of the poem *In Memory of My Feelings*, but he himself cannot (does not want to? is unable to? does not do such things?) translate it into Polish. Thus, he needs to ask Piotr to do it for him. This interpretation – obviously simplifying, reducing the unrooted Sosnowski to the level of simple interpretative recognitions – would explain why Sosnowski covered the poem: because he asked Piotr to translate it, whereas he himself surrendered – to falling in love?, translating only the first verses of the second part of the poem, and what is significant – put in brackets in *Cover* ("the dead haunting/ and the alive, haunted").

The subject's confession that he is emotional towards the text – a slightly ironic confession, since O'Hara's text is compared to an advancing army of potato beetles – peculiarly argues with the dialogicality of the relation between *Cover* and *In Memory of My Feelings* highlighted by scholars. This dialogicality is supposed to be provided by the many changes and replacements, which Sosnowski introduced into the text. First of all, there is the presence of a schooner instead of the original serpent²¹; although Sosnowski – at least initially – remains faithful to the structure of *In Memory of My Feelings*, precisely copying the length of verses and accents, he introduces a number of significant modifications. They start already in the first words of the poem, in which the original "my quietness has a man in it, he's transparent/ and he carries me quietly, like a gondola, through the streets" is replaced by "mój niepokój ma przy

¹⁸"Wouldn't you like to do it, Piotr?/ There is only a quarter of a schooner left./ It sails so very far/ Sense/ heart/ of an arctic convoy, if *to move is to love*" [translation mine, PZ]

¹⁹Frank O'Hara, "Pamięci moich uczuć," trans. Piotr Sommer, *Literatura na Świecie*, no. 9–10 (2015): 75–82.

²⁰"They look like workers of imagination, those beetles,/ and they bring me the sound of waves, which I fell in love with as a hangman" [translation mine, PZ]

²¹Among others, Piórko indicates the polemic elements. See op. cit., pp. 107–108.

sobie broń, ona nie jest biała/ i towarzyszy mi w spokojne dni jak lotniskowiec”²². The original “he” is replaced with the Polish “she”²³ – a gun. Later on in the same verse, Sosnowski also writes that “ona jest funkcjonalna, jak eskadra i eskorta, jako desant”²⁴ (in the place of “he has several likenesses, like stars and years, like numerals”).

Abandoning the “man” (and “me”, “selves”, etc.) for the originally depersonalized “gun”, “ship” or “convoy” is significant. The question of subjectivity in both poems is far more complicated, which can be commented upon here only visually. The subject-protagonist of *In Memory...* is thus obviously still immersed in modernist constructs, he hesitates between the cohesive, essential identity of the relational “self”, and the labile multitude of alternating avatars. However, we should notice that thanks to the autothematic turn towards self, revealed already in the first stanza of the poem, the subject takes a step towards non-modernist concepts of “self”.

Renata Sendyka, whose research interests include self-reflection in modern literature, observes that the very idea of “self” is in a way off the mark: it can only be replaced by the meta-reflective “self”, which will not only be some step towards the deconstruction of the anthropocentric definition of the subject (the pronoun “-self”, although not in its character form, is applied to other beings – driven by the imperative to “protect oneself”, “take care of oneself”, etc.). It is this supreme-self produced in the process of self-reflection (the one that thinks “of itself” – it thinks “itself”, and it distances itself from its temporal and special, concrete and changeable “selves”) is the instantiation bonding together the subject’s experiences²⁵. The matter is a bit more complicated in O’Hara, yet when he writes “my quietness has a man in it, he’s transparent/ and he carries me quietly, like a gondola, through the streets”, he draws quite a similar situation: he talks about a former, direct experience or feeling “my quietness”, which “has a man in it” – some medium for multiple, feeling “selves”, which carry it through the world. The fragile identities of this “self” require protection provided by the “supreme-self”, which also embodies the physical figure of the protagonist (the one that carries like a gondola), which along the way strengthens also the material-spiritual dualism of existence.

Sosnowski’s poem is somewhat different, as it does not contain any emotional evocations of “self”; however, this does not mean that it is absent whatsoever²⁶. *Cover* certainly describes an adventure of the subject (which is evidenced by highlighting the first person “narration”: “I am descending”, “I am looking”, etc.), as well as perhaps – an adventure of some community (the “convoy” which appears a few times refers to a group). Instead of a peculiarly “safe”, emotional account present in O’Hara’s poem (at least initially), Sosnowski

²²“my anxiety has a gun, which is not white/ and it accompanies me on calm days like an aircraft carrier” [translation mine, PZ]

²³“Gun” is a feminine noun in Polish [PZ]

²⁴“She is functional, like a squadron and an escort, as a landing operation” [translation mine, PZ]

²⁵See Roma Sendyka, *Od kultury ja do kultury siebie: o zwrotnych formach w projektach tożsamościowych*, 2015.

²⁶Piéro mentions the emotionality of the whole book of poems *Konwój*: “the «opera-ness» of *Opéry* is about pushing a large dosage of pathos into everyday, banal, and at the same time final situations, i.e. always touching upon death (...)”, Piéro, “Czas to biurokracja, którą tworzą wszyscy,” 114.

consistently describes anxiety, a lack of anchor (“niekonwencjonalny teatr wojny”, “twierdza wysadzona w platynowe powietrze”, “wymowny wrak sterzący u wejścia do portu”²⁷ itd.). One may even claim that the protagonist of *Cover* – as opposed to the protagonist of *In Memory of My Feelings* – lacks a “gondola”: a medium which could bond its existence together. He is only left with a schooner (a wreck, a ship without an anchor), a reference to many cultural texts, out of which one of the most important ones is perhaps *The Drunken Boat* by Arthur Rimbaud.

The motto, taken from August Strindberg, “painted on the wooden square over the shop are my initials A.S floating on a silver white cloud and hooped over with a rainbow”, also influences the interpretation in an interesting way. The analogy between Sosnowski’s and Strindberg’s initials problematizes the issue of authorship, as well as the very existence of “self” as such: does Strindberg really look at *his* initials if those are also Sosnowski’s initials? Does the name – or rather, its abbreviation – really identify the subject, if other subjects share the same name? Do the signs tell us the truth about reality if, first of all, other things can be signified by them, and secondly, there is a world behind them, which is difficult to reduce to words only (a cloud, a rainbow)? Can anything be reduced to a text – the subject to its name or initials, phenomena to their names, an experience to a poem – or maybe everything is text, and the problem is the question of interpretation: if A.S. is not only August Strindberg, but also Andrzej Sosnowski, does it really matter who the “self” is if there is no equivalence? Basically, both poems describe some problems with their own subjectivity and its relationship with the world²⁸, but each does this differently; however, it is worth observing that the simple ascertainment of O’Hara’s modernism and Sosnowski’s postmodernism would face a lot of complications, with the ambiguity of O’Hara’s subject among them.

A full description of all the changes that *Cover* introduces to *In Memory of My Feelings* would require a separate paper. Sosnowski is consistent in the use of marine metaphors (symbols, staffage) – not only the ship, but also the sea, the anchor, fish, etc. On the other hand, in *In Memory of My Feelings*, the counterpoint between the curling serpent (immediately evoking associations with being bonded with the ground – according to the Bible, Satan was sentenced to crawling for an eternity for his deeds) and aerial, mountainous, or even cosmic spaces (“I rise into cool skies/ and gaze at the imponderable world with the simple identification/ of my colleagues, mountains”, “one of me/ flutters up from the center of the track amidst the pink flamingoes”, the moon figure in the verse “a flaking moon drifting across the muddled teeth”). However, significantly, the final verse of the first part of the poem (“and presently the aquiline serpent comes to resemble the Medusa”) brings the figure of one of the Gorgons’ heads; it should be mentioned that it is the head of the only mortal monstrous goddess, Medusa.

Medusa is a sea goddess. For the serpent from O’Hara’s poem, the water space is the scariest; the earth, although full of dangers as well (and dirt, placed there through associations with

²⁷“An unconventional theater of war, a fortress blown up into the platinum air, a meaningful wreck jutting at the entry into a port” [translation mine, PZ]

²⁸Gutorow has also reflected upon the issues of authorship and subjectivity in *Cover* – or rather expressed his doubts regarding the possibility of such a reflection. Gutorow, “Kilwater,” 189–90.

mud), is its kingdom, and the dream space is the sky. Sosnowski focuses precisely on what is mentioned in a negative context in *In Memory of My Feelings*; thus, *Cover* becomes a reversal which, in a way, completes the original poem. The matter is similar in the case of other mentioned elements: the one who keeps walking and asking where he can drop his anchor feels restless (the ambiguous “quietness” can be associated with silence, gentleness, or withdrawal). The gun from *Cover* also appears in O’Hara’s poem, in the line “my quietness has a number of naked selves,/ so many pistols I have borrowed to protect myself/ from creatures who too readily recognize my weapons/ and have murder in their heart!”²⁹.

The “self” produced in *In Memory of My Feelings*, the self-reflective instantiation bonding together the subject of many figures. It is aware of the fragility and defenselessness of those bustling “selves”, hence the borrowed guns – quiet and calm, transparent “supreme-self” – which carries the “self” of the subject and all of its multiplications like a gondola. It does not show any signs of natural aggression: he is a stranger to violence. However, in *Cover*, there is a need for a squadron and an escort, for the poem is based on anxiety; it should be observed that Sosnowski opens his poem with strong affect, whereas the emotional O’Hara opens with calm.

The gondola to which the “quietness” of the subject is compared becomes parallel to Sosnowski’s schooner, a ship which is not associated with a pleasure cruise. Essentially Sosnowski does not really converse with *In Memory of My Feelings*, but, in a way, he remixes the elements used in the poem, and thereby affects their recontextualization. However, he does not change the most general categories of visualization; images such as the earth and the mountains, although replaced by the sea, are still just definitions of space. However, the ship – although significantly different from the serpent – is, just like the animal, chained to a specific surface, across which it moves. Such analogies are obviously remote; however, similar relations can be found across the whole poem, and so O’Hara’s “my father, my uncle,/ my grand-uncle and the several aunts. My/ grand-aunt dying for me, like a talisman, in the war (...)” is rendered as “moje dziecko, moje «ja»,/ zdeklasowani klasycyści i klasycy. Mój/ «smutek tropików», beztroski jak wiatr”³⁰. Both lines employ “family” expressions; in O’Hara, these are literal (father, uncle, aunts), and in Sosnowski, they suggest literary ancestry (it is telling that in further parts of *Cover*, “his child” is portrayed as a jury member in a recitation contest).

Although this would again place this clear division into “subjective” (clear in O’Hara) and “textual” or “literary” (evident in Sosnowski) *mise en abyme*, it should be observed that this textuality of *Cover* – and Sosnowski’s work in general – is peculiarly smashed exactly by taking over the subjectifying elements, or rather by interpreting the subjectivity through textual

²⁹Chłopek expressed similar intuition, yet with some perversity, in terms of polemicality as well as connectivity of both poems, and the similarities between them in terms of visualizing. See Chłopek, “Kogo śmieszy „Cover”?”, 169. However, it would seem that it is possible to argue with the thesis that “the differences are non-uniform and they become significant only where the subject himself or his “self” is discussed, i.e. personal topics, which are the most difficult to talk about”. Perhaps a “lesson in affective poetry” allows for some opening here for creating common places rather than leading to contradictions.

³⁰“My child, my «self», outclassed classicists and classics. My/ «sadness of tropics» carefree like the wind” [translation mine, PZ]

categories – or a text through subjective categories. This allows us to hypothesize that the poetry used (or produced) by Sosnowski through *Cover* is essentially inter-poetry – due to several equally important reasons.

First of all, the linguistic difference is significant: *In Memory of My Feelings* (which at the time had not been translated into Polish) is written in English, whereas *Cover* (whose title is, importantly, English) is written in Polish. The use of the formal layout structure of O'Hara's poem (the division into verses and stanzas, the length of individual lines, accents, and symbols, or the collection of the most significant requisites and motifs), which is not a translation *sensu stricto* (it only resembles one), highlights the appearance of certain inter-poetics – combining both the indicated characteristics of O'Hara and the idiomatic elements of Sosnowski's poetry. *Cover* would be connected with Sosnowski's overall artistic project (if this is the right name for his creative work) through not only the marine style, but also the reoccurring convoy, which is also a part of the title of the book of poems in which *Cover* was published (also, preceding the poem *Convoy*)³¹.

Obviously the meaning of translation is arguable; some scholars even claim that translating poetry means creating it from scratch, that the translator becomes the author, that a full equivalence does not exist, and that the target poem always contains a certain surplus (or, according to less favorable scholars, a certain deficiency) of values and meanings as opposed to the source text. However, the translation practice shows that the translator's autonomy is, in many cases, only aspirational, and such categories as the original and the copy or *mimesis* continue to define the functioning of translated texts. It would thus seem that *Cover* cannot be classified as a translation, and, as has been shown, the poem does not claim to be one. Perhaps it is just a testament of a fascination (interest, liking, anxiety, curiosity, attachment) of the poet in reference to O'Hara's poem. The quoted researchers have also shown that it would be difficult to classify covers as "regular" intertexts of their source texts; they clearly draw some creative potential from specific poems (poetics, styles, phrases, languages) and they implant it in their native tongue (and native poetics)³². However, it is not a parodical or reproductive reference (just like translation is less and less commonly defined as imitation); thus, we will not define covers as parodies or pastiches. On the other hand, it is possible to talk about absorption of some important characteristics of poetics (style, visualization, atmosphere, etc.) and incorporating them to the native poetics, which creates some interpoetics (O'Hara-Sosnowski, but also John Ashbery-Sosnowski. As observed by Anna Kałuża, his poetry "which Sosnowski translated and introduced to the Polish literature constituted a field full of explanations and authentications for the poetic strategies and tools used by Sosnowski"³³).

³¹See Pióro, op. cit., p. 108.

³²Ewa Kraskowska wrote about the issue of intertextuality in translation, see Ewa Kraskowska, "Intertekstualność a przekład," in *Między tekstami: intertekstualność jako problem poetyki historycznej*, ed. Jerzy Ziomek, Janusz Sławiński, and Włodzimierz Bolecki (Warszawa: Wydawn. Nauk. PWN, 1992).

³³See Anna Kałuża, "Andrzej Sosnowski," *Polska Poezja Współczesna. Przewodnik encyklopedyczny*, accessed October 19, 2019, <http://przewodnikpoetycki.amu.edu.pl/encyklopedia/andrzej-sosnowski/>.

The existence of this “interpoetics” occurring between two languages (studying it obviously goes beyond the scope of one paper, although it would be interesting, especially in the context of the issue of translation universals³⁴), or the potential existence of the “translationese” language, characterized by specific linguistic choices observable in numerous translators or the diffusion of calques (or, generally speaking, linguistic models) from one language into another. In Sosnowski, this copying of the English syntax (which is obviously a conscious artistic device rather than an error) occurs in the poem several times. “My anxiety has a gun, which is not white” is an exact copy of the word order of the following phrase: “my quietness has a man in it, he’s transparent” (and later: “She is functional, like a squadron and an escort, as a landing operation” in the place of “he has several likenesses, like stars and years, like numerals”), together with the repetition of the personal pronoun “she” which is perhaps not unnatural, but rare – we would change it to the more neutral “which” in the first quoted verse, and leave it out in the second one. Likewise, in the already quoted beginning of part two, where the subject lists: “My child, my «self», outclassed classicists and classics. My/ «sadness of tropics» carefree like the wind”. Although the repetitions of the possessive pronoun stand out here, it should be noted that it is not characteristic for the Polish language (i.e. we would rather say “take my hand” than “take me by my hand”).

Secondly, it would seem that this inter-poetics refers not only to the textual level, i.e. it reveals itself on the level of form, in terms of stylistic devices, construction, symbolic staffage, etc. This inter-creativity can also be considered through the deep structure. Of course, this does not mean that Sosnowski becomes a non-post-modernist, non-semiotics-central poet (if he ever has been one) because he read O’Hara’s poem (or any other text). It should be observed how taking over many elements of *In Memory of My Feelings* influences the tone of the whole poem. The clear attachment to textual issues, visible among other things in the autothematic parts, is enriched not just by the background or attitude of the emotional, experiential poem by O’Hara, but also through introducing untypical solutions across the cover (i.e. the existential questions “I am walking and asking”, the picture of the subject locked in a submarine, and searching for the place to drop the anchor, etc.), which are not simply copied, but (exactly in Sosnowski’s style) reduced to the role of affective tropes (“self” tropes, as Ryszard Nycz would argue) scattered across the “swarm of verses”, mixed with various other traces, broken down with irony and jokes, making it impossible to create one interpretation of *Cover* – just as it is impossible to create one interpretation of *In Memory of My Feelings*. The common places created in *Cover* includes common places for two languages, which, however, are not translations. They show an intriguing (post)modernist discussion with subjectivity and textuality, which originates at the intersection of influences and trends, becoming important voices in literary metareflection.

translated by Małgorzata Olsza

³⁴Ewa Kraskowska, “Universals of Translation,” *Forum Poetyki*, no. 14 (2018): 74–77.

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KEYWORDS

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ABSTRACT:

This paper is an attempt at another interpretation of the poems *In Memory of My Feelings* by Frank O'Hara and *Cover* by Andrzej Sosnowski, in the light of their autothematic motifs. The paper focuses first on a close examination of the relationship between the two poems, looking at both differences (language, emblems, symbols, contexts) and similarities, trying to assess how O'Hara influenced Sosnowski. Later, the focus shifts to the relationship between the two poems and a discussion of a possible interpretation of Sosnowski's poem in terms of interpoetics.

metareflection

Andrzej Sosnowski

LITERARY TRANSLATION

TRANSLATION STUDIES

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Post-literate Poetics

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c r i t i c s :

Ewa Paczoska, *Lekcje uważności.*

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“From one experience to another – man, an experiencing machine”

Jacek Dukaj, *After writing*¹

“What can you do? Follow new trends and fads (...)
Perhaps you will be the one who meets Aliens first”

Jacek Dukaj, *Black oceans*²

How to read *After writing*?

Since Jacek Dukaj is first and foremost a science fiction writer, I would like to begin by commenting on this convention. In science fiction, there is some room for speculation in formulating quasi-scientific theories. Indeed, science fiction “by default” presents the reader with a certain vision of the future. After all, waiting for researchers to confirm certain hypotheses would put an end to science fiction. What is more, the speculative nature of discoveries, inventions, or theories which explain the workings of physical reality does not negate their effects, i.e. future conclusions. To put it simply, it can be said that science-fiction writers sometimes get lost on the way, but they still reach their final destination. A great example

¹ Jacek Dukaj, *Po piśmie* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2019), 395. Quotes are marked in the main text with AW and page number. All quotes were translated into English by Małgorzata Olsza.

² Jacek Dukaj, *Czarne oceany*, II (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2008), 172–73. All quotes were translated into English by Małgorzata Olsza.

is the classic *Frankenstein*³ – the novel asks questions about man's creative possibilities and its consequences, especially as regards their ethical side. The fact that the successor of *homo sapiens* will not be made of resurrected corpses, but rather be constructed in the process of bioengineering or digitization, is not as important here.⁴ Most of the questions that Mary Shelley formulated in the first half of the nineteenth century remain valid even today.

The essay is different. The literary essay is an associative, non-linear, digressive, and subjective narrative; it is a reflective and hybrid genre. On the other hand, there is also the scientific essay with its stylistic coherence, cause-and-effect logic, and careful documentation of sources and references.

I think we can read Jacek Dukaj's *After writing* in two ways. In the first interpretation, the reader would have to follow Dukaj's argument closely and criticize his selection and use of sources, certain generalizations, and some arbitrary conclusions. The problem is, however, that Dukaj uses different (scientific, journalistic) texts from a number of different fields (neurology, philosophy, linguistics), stating that

I do not discover any unknown facts here. I did not conduct sociological research that would provide new data. I stole every brick used to build this arch of theory from other people's architectures of thought. I only organize (reorganize) them on my own (AW, pp. 233-234).

Michał Tabaczyński⁵ engages in such a critical dialogue with Dukaj's text. In his erudite and well-researched article, Tabaczyński points out the deficiencies in Dukaj's methodology: "(...) Dukaj makes many simplifications, but the most important ones concern the social and the narrative structures."⁶ First of all, "for Dukaj, literature in the literate era is reduced to a narrative structure (...)."⁷ Drawing on Roland Barthes, Jay David Bolter, and the history of literature, Tabaczyński proves that non-linear thinking characterized writing even back in its glory days. The same is true when it comes to Dukaj's view of print; Tabaczyński accuses Dukaj of perpetuating the "Gutenbergian myth," which looks at the aftermath of the invention of the printing press in terms of revolution, not evolution. In addition to the allegations of simplifications, also as regards the intermediate stages of the pre-literate – literate – post-literate evolution, Dukaj's vision also raises concerns when it comes to ignoring remediation processes of the new media,⁸ especially since the direct transfer of experiences would "effectively challenge the logic of the evolution of literacy."⁹ According to Tabaczyński,

³ Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, *Frankenstein* (New York: Aerie Books LTD, 1993).

⁴ I wrote about the latest science-fiction films which present different ways of creating the successor of *homo sapiens* in: Piotr Gorliński-Kucik, "Między Nadzieją a Paranoją. O Post-Człowieku w Filmach Science Fiction (Na Kilku Przykładach)," *Creatio Fantastica*, no. 2 (2018).

⁵ Michał Tabaczyński, "Po huku, po szumie, po piśmie," *Dwutygodnik.com*, accessed October 23, 2019, <https://www.dwutygodnik.com/artykul/8315-po-huku-po-szumie-po-pismie.html>.

⁶ Tabaczyński.

⁷ Tabaczyński.

⁸ Mirosław Filiciak and Alek Tarkowski, "ALFABET NOWEJ KULTURY: R jak Remediacja," *Dwutygodnik.com*, accessed October 23, 2019, <https://www.dwutygodnik.com/artykul/701-alfabet-nowej-kultury-r-jak-remediacja.html>. It is a process in which old and new media influence one another and their users (television has influenced the Internet, which is now "forcing" television to become similar to the Internet).

⁹ Tabaczyński, "Po huku, po szumie, po piśmie."

instead of following Dukaj's train of thought, we should rely on Pierre Bourdieu's theory of the habitus, mainly because, apart from writing, we are influenced by "bodily, orientation, and kinesthetic experiences, unconscious symbolism of space"¹⁰ as well as gender and social class divisions.

While I agree with some of Tabaczyński's points, I would argue with others. We know that not all literature is narrative, but what matters for Dukaj (and what he states directly) is the fact that the linear novel/story has exerted the strongest (and the most far-reaching) effect on literature, and eventually became its own nemesis. I would also like to point out that Dukaj, as the author of *The death of Axolotl*, does not ignore the phenomenon of remediation. He emphasizes the transitional nature of the current stage: Netflix series are embedded in the order of writing, but mediate towards experience modules, which means that we are dealing here with an evolution and not a revolution. The concept of "the literate mindstyle" points to the fact that the social conditions of the habitus are embedded in writing, and seen as an instrument of power, because they have been shaped by writing. Literary language, metaphors, poetical language, and creative word-formation are endowed with some added value. Dukaj did not write a scientific dissertation that is firmly rooted in a certain methodology. His intricate construction is speculative by design, which makes it so enchanting and, above all, so compelling. *After writing* was written by a futurist writer, and I think that it should be read in such a context – i.e. similarly to how we read Stanisław Lem's essays.¹¹

That is why I propose to read *After writing* in a different manner: as a literary essay, or even literature, which, at times, follows the conventions of science fiction (I will come back to this point at the end of my article). I want to focus on reconstructing the reasoning behind the text, because it seems sound. To paraphrase Gombrowicz, Dukaj wished to "put something into language," but could not do it in prose (hence, I believe, why he failed in *Rekursja* [*Reursion*]). He made a new attempt in *After writing*, which is, as he admits, "a jam session of associations and hypotheses" (AW, p. 232). Indeed, Dukaj treats some elements of his earlier novels as signs of a new emerging concept.¹²

Putting a concept into language (Dukaj on himself)

Although we may interpret many of Dukaj's earlier works *ex post facto* in the context of post-literacy (Dukaj openly suggests such a reading), more or less since 2012, we can clearly see in his works certain interesting concepts. "The Portrait of a Nontetic"¹³ presents a world in which people possess the sixth sense. Due to a birth defect, Laura, the protagonist of the sto-

¹⁰ Tabaczyński.

¹¹ See Stanisław Lem, *Summa technologiae*, IV (Lublin: Wydawnictwo Lubelskie, 1984). Lem was not always able to predict the intermediate stages of the evolution of certain technologies, and sometimes he was wrong. His essays are also interdisciplinary, and we find in them some generalizations and simplifications; yet, Lem's predictions proved to be relatively accurate.

¹² In the footnotes, I provide the most important references to Dukaj's novel. I discussed Dukaj's works in more detail in: Piotr Gorliński-Kucik, *TechGnoza, uchronia, science fiction: proza Jacka Dukaja* (Katowice: Wyd. Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, 2017).

¹³ Jacek Dukaj, "Portret nietoty," in *Zachcianki: dziesięć zmysłowych opowieści*; Chutnik, Dębski, Dukaj, Gretkowska, Kofta, Kuczok, Miłoszewski, Plebanek, Tulli, Twardoch, ed. Beata Kołodziejska (Warszawa: Świat Książki, 2012). All quotes were translated into English by Małgorzata Olsza.

ry, is deprived of the sixth sense: “(...) the diagnosis of tetologists was definite and hopeless: no tetic nerves, complete tetic neuropathy.”¹⁴ What does to tet around, to tet away, or to tet up mean? Imagine asking a deaf person to identify F sharp major or a blind person to describe the color red. Laura constantly strives to translate her experiences using sensual associations: “This is how Laura’s life mission began, the impossible challenge, her quixotic quest and sensual katabasis: to translate the world of a tetic into the world of a nontetic.”¹⁵ The world of the fictional sixth sense is rendered by means of neologisms and synesthesia:

The next day, she woke up believing that the opposite was true: the sky was cold blue, air was glassy; in the attic, through the open skylight, there chattered October city cherubs, the smell was one of wet umbrellas and windy heather (...).¹⁶

Laura’s partner is Gustaw Rak-Raczyński; he is a brilliant artist who creates works of art that are perceived with the help of tetic nerves. His great project is called “the archeology of the spirit;” its goal is to translate the tetic experiences of people from other eras. In the end, Laura becomes a part of his artistic installation.

I have already written about *The Old Axolotl*¹⁷ in *Forum of Poetics*.¹⁸ The book employs a remarkable metaphor of the human condition; analyzed in the perspective of transhumanism, man is conceived of as an immature larval form, which, however, thanks to the impulse “from an outside” civilization, can reproduce. The form of the book is also remarkable. Published in a digital format, it tries to test the poetics of the e-book novel thanks to hyperlinks, footnotes, and graphics,¹⁹ exploring the possibilities of multimedia communication. My analysis led me to the conclusion that literature can do without the paper book, switching to other media (just like a human can change from its “natural” organic form to others). Literature will be coping with *After writing* for some time, and only the instinct to share experiences will survive (it may take the form of written literature from time to time).

Another experiment is the Polish translation of *Heart of darkness*.²⁰ Dukaj wished to translate the experimental fiction of Joseph Conrad, who transferred his experiences by means of low tech, into the Polish language of the twenty-first century.²¹ Conrad originally assumed that “All art, therefore, appeals primarily to the senses,” and the task of the writer “which [he is] trying to achieve is, by the power of the written word to make you hear, to make you

¹⁴ Dukaj, 91.

¹⁵ Dukaj, 69.

¹⁶ Dukaj, 62.

¹⁷ Jacek Dukaj, *Starość Aksalotla* (Allegro, 2015).

¹⁸ Piotr Gorliński-Kucik, “The Relocation of Literature,” *Forum of Poetics*, no. 5 (jesień 2016): 46–57.

¹⁹ A similar trend can be found in: Jacek Dukaj, *Wroniec* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2009).

²⁰ Joseph Conrad, *Serce ciemności* = *Heart of darkness*, trans. Jacek Dukaj (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2017). The text was translated in 2015, but the fascination with Conrad’s novel could already be seen in the story *Serce mroku* [Heart of darkness] from 1998, Jacek Dukaj, “Serce mroku,” in *Król Bólu* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2010).

²¹ To learn more about the method of sensory deprivation used by Conrad to build empathy and understand the (sometimes non-existent!) other see: Dukaj, *Po piśmie*, 159–62. Such an interpretation of *Heart of Darkness* becomes an important element of Dukaj’s theory.

feel — it is, before all, to make you see.”²² Therefore, Dukaj’s contemporary translation cannot be judged with the use of standard translation criteria; it is an extremely domesticated translation, which takes into account the changes that have taken place in the minds of readers. Does the reader empathize with the narrator, who empathizes with Marlow, who empathizes with Kurtz more in Dukaj’s translation than in previous translations? We can notice the differences when we study selected fragments in English,²³ Magda Heydel’s Polish translation,²⁴ and Jacek Dukaj’s Polish translation.²⁵

In the story “Vtrko,”²⁶ Daniel Massny travels to the fictional post-Soviet Republic of Trska to find out that he is one of many illegitimate children of the former dictator Milovoi Strkovski. In addition to a few fragments in which Dukaj employs stylistic experiments that are still rooted in writing to convey experiences, I find sections in which politics are discussed as something that does not involve politicians, but utilizes new media instead, particularly interesting:

(...) journalists and conmen who work in culture are the true politicians of the 21st century; MPs and ministers are only forging into laws and ordinances what has already been instilled in the voters’ minds. – The next Stalin Hitler Strvkovski will be born out of a Netflix series.²⁷

It is a world in which big data knows more about us than we do. When Massny suffered from depression and suicidal thoughts:

Even Google provided him with search suggestions for *self-euthanasia methods*. Perhaps you never go to these dark cellars of the mind, but Amazons and Facebooks already have their detailed maps.²⁸

²² J. Conrad, Preface to *The nigger of the ‘Narcissus’: A tale of the sea*, Project Gutenberg, online: <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/17731/17731-h/17731-h.htm> [date of access: 16 August 2019]; see further: Dukaj, 155.

²³ The first description of Marlow reads as follows: “Marlow sat cross-legged right aft, leaning against the mizzenmast. He had sunken cheeks, a yellow complexion, a straight back, an ascetic aspect, and, with his arms dropped, the palms of hands outwards, resembled an idol. (...) »Mind,« he began again, lifting one arm from the elbow, the palm of the hand outwards, so that, with his legs folded before him, he had the pose of a Buddha preaching in European clothes and without a lotus-flower (...)” – J. Conrad, *Heart of darkness*, Project Gutenberg, online: <http://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/526/pg526.txt> [date of access: 23 July 2019].

²⁴ Magda Heydel’s Polish translation of this fragment reads as follows: “Marlow siedział po turecku z prawej strony rufy, oparty o maszt. Policzki miał zapadłe, żółtawą cerę, proste plecy; sprawiał wrażenie ascety, a siedząc tak z opuszczonymi ramionami i otwartymi dłońmi, wyglądał niczym bożek (...) – A jednak – podjął po chwili, unosząc ku nam zgiętą w łokciu rękę z otwartą dłonią: siedział ze skrzyżowanymi nogami, wyglądał niczym nauczający Budda, w europejskim stroju i bez kwiatu lotosu – a jednak nikt z nas miałby dokładnie takich samych odczuć jak on” – Joseph Conrad, *Jądro ciemności*, trans. Magdalena Heydel (Kraków: Społeczny Instytut Wydawniczy Znak, 2011), 8, 11.

²⁵ Jacek Dukaj’s Polish translation of this fragment reads as follows: “Z prawej strony rufy, oparty o maszt, siedzi Marlow: zapadłe policzki, pożółkła cera, ręce wzdłuż ciała, otwarte dłonie – asceta, bożek, Budda (...) A Marlow – skrzyżowane nogi, jednak ręka otwarta dłonią do góry, ubiór Europejczyka, ale to Budda, Budda minus kwiat lotosu (...)” – Dukaj, “Serce mroku,” 7, 9.

²⁶ Jacek Dukaj, “Vtrko,” in *Ojciec: Opowiadania*, by Jacek Dukaj et al. (Warszawa: Ringier Axel Springer Polska Sp. z o.o., 2017). All quotes were translated into English by Małgorzata Olsza.

²⁷ Dukaj, 246.

²⁸ Dukaj, 247.

Perhaps the most interesting literary text in which Dukaj tries to depict both the concept of transferring experiences and the tool as a subject, is “The Empire of Clouds.”²⁹ This grand alternative story is based on the fantastic concept developed by Professor Geist in Bolesław Prus’s *Doll*,³⁰ namely a metal that is lighter than air. Stanisław Wokulski and Julian Ochocki, who are both from a Country that Does Not Exist (Poland), guard the secret. They share the formula of how to make the Iron of the Spirit with the Nihon Empire³¹ (Japan) so that when war breaks out, Poland may be reborn, reclaiming its lands from the Russian Empire. Nihon (which in this reality is relatively democratized) builds Iron Spirit Ships, increases its military power, and becomes an empire. The Republic of Poland is reborn in Europe. Its international standing is dependent on light metal technology³² and Wokulski is the president of Poland until the coup.³³

However, what is most important in “The empire of clouds” is the “impersonal transmission of knowledge.” Kiyoko, who works with Ochocki, uses *kanji* characters to record speech; since this technique is too time-consuming, she starts using *soki*,³⁴ a graphic system that resembles painting. Then she “translates” *soki* into *kanji*, and although the sounds of speech are similar, the meanings of the two entries differ significantly. Kiyoko and Ochocki do not know why the two recordings differ; Ochocki states that “I cannot show step by step, thought by thought, why it works. But it works. We can see that it works.”³⁵ The Japanese try to discover the secret, but Kiyoko is helpless: “Thought does not need the thinker (...) It needs a hand and a pen.”³⁶ Ultimately, “We do not have to understand the path that has led us to this knowledge in order to make use of it.”³⁷ Although the metal that is lighter than air is studied at universities, facilitates technological progress and, as a result, changes the face of the world, if I understand it correctly, no one really knows how to produce it.³⁸ “The empire of clouds” is a story about the subtleties of writing and about the fact that when you translate one system into another, a surplus is generated of which man is not aware. This surplus, to paraphrase *After writing*, becomes a subject in its own right and henceforth treats man as a tool. “The arrow does not need the archer.”³⁹

²⁹ Jacek Dukaj, “Imperium chmur,” in *Inne światy: antologia inspirowana pracami Jakuba Różalskiego*, by Jacek Dukaj et al. (Kraków: Wydawnictwo SQN, 2018).

³⁰ See: the chapter “An apparition”: Bolesław Prus, *The Doll*, trans. David J Welsh (New York: New York Review Books, 2011), 371–83.

³¹ Over time, its native residents adopt the customs of the “savages” from Europe.

³² Dukaj, “Imperium chmur,” 591.

³³ Roman Dmowski’s and Józef Piłsudski’s (personified by the brothers Esau and Jacob Ochocki) notions of independence also play a role in the conflict. Dmowski, in consultation with Wokulski, was supposed to raise capital and “blackmail” Russia with “the possible uprising;” Piłsudski was a military leader, who did not shy away from military conflict. Dukaj, 531.

³⁴ Dukaj, 429–31. On post-literacy in Chinese culture and civilization see: Dukaj, *Po piśmie*, 249–52.

³⁵ Dukaj, “Imperium chmur,” 484.

³⁶ Dukaj, 507.

³⁷ Dukaj, 567.

³⁸ Dukaj, 565, 572–73.

³⁹ Dukaj, 595.

After writing

Five shorter essays, published from 2013 to 2017, precede the titular one.⁴⁰ They prepare the reader for the discussion of postliteracy by looking at a wider perspective of (1) transhumanism, (2) decrease in human labor, (3) technology, (4) digitalization, and (5) knowledge transfer. In the perspective of (1) transhumanism, man and human environment evolve from the material to the non-material.⁴¹ Our bodies become more and more virtual; we transform them freely. Since “playing the game subjectifies its rules,” it is possible that technology is using us to evolve.⁴² Technological development results in a progressive (2) decrease in human labor. Dukaj believes in the power of the economy of abundance that will support millions of unemployed people.⁴³ If work is rewarding in and of itself, then we must create its artificial replacement. “Entertainment becomes our work; entertainment becomes the meaning of life” (AW, p. 76).⁴⁴ As a result, entertainment industry thrives, and big data analytics algorithms⁴⁵ offer the audiences texts that are better suited to personal, even unconscious, preferences. Importance and value will be engineered (AW, pp. 78-80).

Technology (3) eliminates dissatisfaction (hope)⁴⁶ by bridging the gap between “I want” and “I have.” YouTube, Netflix, and Amazon constantly offer us new texts of which we have never heard before. “Posthumanism may be summarized with the following words: ‘Knowledge about man is beyond man’ ” (AW, p. 100), Dukaj writes. In the digital age, everything is digitalized; everything is (4) devoid of “aura” (a reference to the concept of Walter Benjamin). Our art is the art of living, lifestyle; we live each other in social media. Art will soon be created by artificial intelligence; “(...) Logos alone (...) determines the shape of humanity that is devoid of ‘aura.’ Technology creates values” (AW, p. 141). However, the fact that man is no longer

⁴⁰ “Trzecia Wojna Światowa Ciała z Umysłem” [The third world war between body and mind] was published in *Znak* (2013). “Szczęśliwi uprawiacze nudy” [Happy practitioners of boredom] was published in *Przegląd Polityczny* (2019). “Do kresu nadziei” [To the end of hope] was originally delivered as a lecture during the TeKa Refleksji (2016) lectures. “Sztuka w czasach sztucznej inteligencji” [Art in times of artificial intelligence] was also originally delivered as a lecture at Forum Przyszłości Kultury and later published in *Gazeta Wyborcza* (2017). “Live me” was first published in the anthology *Conradology* and in *Książki* (2017); see: Dukaj, *Po piśmie*, 399–400.

⁴¹ “The First World War between Body and Mind was a religious war. The Second World War between Body and Mind was a philosophical war. The Third World War between Body and Mind is a technological war.” (Dukaj, 27.).

⁴² Dukaj first touches upon this problem in *Czarne oceany* [Black oceans] when he writes about “metaksokracja,” see: J. Dukaj, *Czarne oceany*, 2nd edition, Cracow 2008; see also: PP, p. 10. Dukaj writes about transhumanism in almost all of his texts. On the most advanced stage in the development of civilization, see: Jacek Dukaj, “Aguerre w świecie,” in *Król Bólu* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2010); see also Jacek Dukaj, *Perfekcyjna niedoskonałość: pierwsza tercja progresu* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2009).

⁴³ Dukaj showed this in the most vivid way in “Crux.” In Poland in 2054, the unemployed and the poor rebel against the salariat, which, thanks to increased work efficiency and social programs, finances them, see: Jacek Dukaj, “Crux,” in *Król Bólu* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2010).

⁴⁴ In “Linia oporu” [Line of resistance], characters exist in such a state, called *nolensum* – you can earn a living in a relatively short time. “Plaje” and “szlaje” provide entertainment for people who have no purpose in life. People also function in “constellations of friends,” and their relationships with others resemble relationships between social media users, see Jacek Dukaj, “Linia oporu,” in *Król Bólu* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2010).

⁴⁵ Big data is collected mainly via the Internet. Social networks (e.g. Facebook and the entire Google ecosystem) constantly analyze what, when, and how we click, what content interests us more, where and when we go (GPS), and much more.

⁴⁶ Dukaj “bends” Polish; he writes about “nadziejowanie” [to hope] instead of “posiadanie nadziei” [to have hope], see: Dukaj, *Po piśmie*, 94 and ff.

a subject does not mean that he is no longer human. Experiences are (5) transferred in the following manner: words → figurative art → augmented reality → mind-machine interface (AW, p. 153). If experiences are transferred in such a way, the sender and the receiver do not have to code and decode experiences by means of signs.

These are the fundamentals of Dukaj's theory. Man is ruled by his instinct to manifest experiences, and therefore human history can be conceived of as the history of how the transfer of experiences has evolved from orality, through literacy, to direct transfer. These three orders generate three mindstyles (which are neither mentalities nor worldviews), which in turn generate three different humanities, shaping economy, aesthetics, ethics and politics.⁴⁷

Let us return to the idea that "playing the game subjectifies its rules." Man has played many important games over the centuries and has "named (...) rules and erected statutes and altars dedicated to them" (AW, p. 192).⁴⁸ But perhaps we should look at this game differently: it is not us who play with signs and language; it is language that uses us. I think that a good example of such a novel approach is literature as a system: the "insiders," i.e. writers, critics, scholars, operate in the system of mutual references to texts, conventions, and poetics. They play a game of literature. Or, as Dukaj would say, literature is playing a game of us. "(...) What uses us here has no intellect, no intention, no will. It is; that is all that can be honestly said about it" (AW, p. 193).⁴⁹

The oral mindstyle (based on redundant, totalizing and emphatic orality) was supplanted by the literate mindstyle when agrarian culture and urban organisms generated an economic surplus that had to be managed (and "recorded" first). The literate mindstyle taught us how to think logically, rely on symbols, ideas, abstractions, and analytical constructs, and express structural empathy (writing created humanity governed by the literate mindstyle). Both formations are similar, insofar as they both code experiences by means of symbols.

The next stage is to abandon coding/decoding altogether and focus on the experience itself. We will begin using technology that is more effective in transferring experiences – we will transfer experiences in themselves, instead of signs. In other words, the instinct to manifest experiences will lead us to abandon coding and decoding altogether (AW, p. 266). Direct transfer will replace natural environmental stimuli (AW, p. 272). Experiences will be transferred by

⁴⁷ Such a concept is in a way similar to the views of McLuhan. McLuhan assumes that experiences, thought patterns, and expression are shaped by the media, which are extensions of human senses. As a result, media shape man. If I understand it correctly, post-literacy will not only popularize the phenomenon of the "global village," but also generate extreme media that will turn humans into passive recipients who do not have to interpret the received message, see: Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media* (London: Routledge, 2001). Walter Ong wrote about writing as technology and described the differences in human mentality as influenced by orality and writing (see: Walter J Ong and John Hartley, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (London; New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2013)).

⁴⁸ Dukaj tried to express de-subjectification and subjectification in *Lód* [Ice] (see: Jacek Dukaj, *Lód* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2007)). When Benedykt Gierosławski was under the power of frozen thought structures, the language structures used by the first-person narrator changed ("it did," "it went," "it laughed"). In *Inne pieśni* [Other songs], the characters struggled with forms that determined behavior (Jacek Dukaj, *Inne pieśni*, II (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2009)).

⁴⁹ In a way, D.L. Everett, to whom Dukaj refers, thinks in a similar way in the context of language: Daniel Leonard Everett, *Language: The Cultural Tool*, 2013.

means of Virtual Reality and Augmented Reality, and then directly to the mind; the senses will not play any role in this process⁵⁰ (if I understand it correctly, this would be the triumph of direct experience).

The pre-literate man thought in terms of verbs. The literate man thinks in terms of nouns. The post-literate man will think in terms of adjectives (AW, p. 210), because the quality of the transferred experiences, whose source man will not be able to verify personally, will be the most important. Thus, the direct transfer of experiences exceeds the boundaries of fiction and real life, collapsing the opposition between fiction and non-fiction. Experiences become "truths."

Can we still go back to old mindstyles? Dukaj states that "if you have been brought up in the culture of writing, you probably think that post-literacy is the time of cultural Armageddon and the decline of a written culture" (AW, p. 187). As a "product of writing," man has been influenced by traditional "hierarchies of prestige." Although in the countries in which the direct transfer of experiences is the most developed, IQ scores are and have been falling for decades, the criterion itself is immersed in the logic of writing and soon a new indicator of intelligence will be devised. "Usually, you think that such changes are for the worse. However, what matters here are the changes in value systems, according to which we measure inferiority and superiority" (AW, p. 265).

Today, we read less, because reading takes too much time,⁵¹ and we do not have to read in order to function in society, achieve professional and economic success (it no longer guarantees effective learning), or even be part of the community. Writing's last "advantage" is its ability to format the brain so that it is able to focus on one activity for a long time. Although the number of (also written) texts is growing, the post-literary format of the book is becoming more popular, and bibliophilia is becoming a very popular alternative trend.⁵² Audiovisual communication (interviews, lectures, podcasts, audiobooks) is becoming more and more popular, not only because it is advertised and developed by the entertainment industry (it is currently the best way of storytelling; it is part of everyday life). It is also very popular in the press, essay writing, school education and academic education, mainly in the form of multimedia presentations.

If Dukaj is right, then the end of literature is nigh. Apart from transferring experiences, the only remnant of literature is man himself. Agency, expressing ideas, formalism of language,

⁵⁰ "Mass media practitioners claim that technology that will enable transferring experiences in an extreme version, by bypassing sensory stimuli, will be available in the near future. It will allow experiences to travel from one brain to another without any intermediaries (...)" (Dukaj, *Po piśmie*, 277.).

⁵¹ See: Jacek Dukaj, "Za długie, nie przeczytam...", *Tygodnik Powszechny*, accessed October 23, 2019, <https://www.tygodnikpowszechny.pl/za-dlugie-nie-przeczytam-142865>.; see also: Jacek Dukaj, "Lament Miłośnika Cegieł," *Gazeta Wyborcza*, November 12, 2015.; see: Dukaj, *Po piśmie*, 10.

⁵² Indeed, we should acknowledge how the manner in which we talk about literature has changed. In addition to literary criticism, there are numerous commentaries about books (notes, summaries, discussions) that can be found in online blogs. However, a specific form of alternative bibliophilia is also becoming more and more popular; it does not focus on the text but on the book itself. Instagram is a powerful platform – many users post colorful photos of books. The true scale of this phenomenon can be experienced, if you use the hashtag #bookstagram.

conjuring up “landscapes of the spirit” will also remain in the domain of literature. The literate man may find consolation in the fact that he will probably be the engineer responsible for transferring experiences directly (unless technology achieves autonomy first) or that cycles will alternate (literacy – post-literacy – literacy).

Third humanity: The poetics of the post-literate mindstyle

The new era will be the time of post-religious spirituality. Empathy and non-subjective thinking will be governed by philosophical discourse – it will be modelled on “the art of being,” “whatever-being” or “being-such-as-it-is” will dominate social life.⁵³ In economy, money is already becoming an empty sign and transactions are becoming more and more virtualized.⁵⁴ Politics will be based on individuality, because in the world of individuals it will be impossible to reduce different experiences to simple components: “(...) society does not exist (...) There are only billions of identities (...) [so we play, PGK] with transferring these identities” (AW, p. 353). In addition, we can live in every and any narrative which we “enter” (we live in post-fiction, so we should not find post-truth and fake news that exciting). Democracy will turn into pathocracy and it will be governed by the fourth, symbolic, estate (man will not control it).

The post-literate man will be a biological experiencing machine. He will be de-subjectified by infinite recursiveness (AW, pp. 384-386). Since identity (I am what I have experienced) is transferable (we stream experiences and emotions), we will sail on the rivers of experiences in which everyone lives everyone else: “The hermeneutic circle of Facebook looks as follows: John lives Frank who lives Pierre who lives Svetlana who lives Mariko who lives Li who lives John” (AW, p. 172). Everything is content; experiences (they are authentic because we experience them) give rise to universal passive experiencing machines that believe in the fiction of their personal freedom. We live in a state of (in Burke’s understanding) sublime flow in which “I” is turned off and “pure experience” is turned on. The processes of de-subjectification of man and subjectification of experiences are logical consequences of transferring experiences directly. “Life lives beyond us” (AW, p. 393), because “Being is experiencing” (AW, p. 393).

What will post-literate poetics be like? We do not know exactly; it is unthinkable, because we could not possibly imagine it as people immersed in the writing mindstyle (just as we could not possibly imagine how to communicate with aliens whose thinking would be defined by other biologies, cultures, or physics). Pornography, which is always in the technological

⁵³ Dukaj comments on the views of Agamben (see: Giorgio Agamben, *The Coming Community*, trans. Michael Hardt (Minneapolis: London University of Minnesota Press, 2013).): “Agamben needs such thought tools [which he borrows from the history of philosophy, PGK] to delineate the possibilities of a community of ‘people without properties.’ Individuals will not be defined by identity or differences between them (...) Only by being – every one separately” (Dukaj, *Po piśmie*, 340.). The Italian philosopher also writes about the “antinomy between the value of individuality and generality” found in language, changes in communication, and the processes of de-subjectification of the “whatever-being”/the experiencing machine. However, Dukaj also points out differences, especially when it comes to politics. Dukaj thus in some respects draws on Agamben, whom he considers an important thinker (see Dukaj, 339–43.).

⁵⁴ For example, meta-stock exchange and dematerialized money in *Czarne oceany* [Black oceans] see: Dukaj, *Czarne oceany*.

avant-garde in order to effectively satisfy the “inborn hunger for naked libidial experiences” (AW, p. 217), often by means of virtual reality, may give us a clue. Experiencing porn is context-free, timeless, and adjectival (only the quality of the personal experience matters), and therefore, as such, it is beyond truth and falsehood.

We will probably find ourselves in a post-fictional or even post-linear order; probabilistic editing will govern the connections between various micro-texts, experience maps, or interactions (AW, p. 338). Cause-and-effect logic will be replaced by a multidirectional and associative narrative, governed by the logic of “associating experiences” (AW, p. 276).

We will make our way through texts just as we make our way through YouTube’s videos or Netflix series (which are still governed by the logic of writing). The difference will be that SI algorithms will make more accurate suggestions (based on biometric data) before we even realize that we want to see a given clip or series. “And thus we realize that the reality we are experiencing, at home, on the street, at work, in the public sphere, is falling apart, fragmented and chaotic. That it is more like Instagram, more like a Facebook wall, and endless links” (AW, p. 303).

Post-literate poetics is evolutionarily linked to the poetics of writing in its final years: “(...) the culture of mash-ups and patchworks, sampling and covering, DJ’s mentality that no longer applies to club music, but to life in general. Such developments have already signaled the rise of post-literate and post-linear mindstyle” (AW, p. 275). I think that “the exhaustion of modernism,” with its formal experiments (Leopold Buczkowski’s non-linear narratives, Witold Gombrowicz’s diarist poetics, the diarist poetics of the novel in general, Tadeusz Konwicki’s fabulations, or Jerzy Limon’s experimental writing), also exemplifies this new approach to writing. It demonstrates the fact that the linear narrative has reached its “breaking point.” Fiction no longer relies on descriptions, behaviorism is no longer the dominant language, and the poetics of the fragment becomes dominant. Other postmodern concepts could be listed here as well.

Indeed, there are many examples of this process. However, we should instead focus on describing respective poetics accurately, because not only do they sit on the border between the literate and post-literate mindstyles, but they are also transmedial. I think that one of the best examples is the vlog, whose genealogy could be traced from the written journal, through the internet journal (blog), to the video journal (vlog). Of course, each genre has changed over time in itself and has taken many different forms. The intimate notebook of a nineteenth-century governess is different from the diary of a twentieth-century writer who wishes to publish his work. The blog is published on the Internet, but the author can either share it with a group of close friends, or, for example, with the general public.

Let me give the example of Krzysztof Gonciarz’s YouTube channel.⁵⁵ Gonciarz is Polish, but he lives in Tokyo. On the one hand, his channel draws on the generic traditions of the diary

⁵⁵ Krzysztof Gonciarz, YouTube, accessed November 23, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/user/wybuchajacebeczki>.

and thus exemplifies the literate mindstyle (it is characterized by linear narration; the author subjectively describes his travels, business ventures, and artistic activities). On the other hand, Gonciarz relies on the audiovisual medium, drawing on internet and filmic conventions. Long shots of landscapes, carefully composed frames, carefully selected color palette, and existential first-person narration intertwine with shaky camera sequences, interviews (or Q&As), and the chaos of everyday life. It is a generic cross-over,⁵⁶ only on a much wider scale (varieties, genres, media cross over) and at a much faster pace than before.

Krzysztof Gonciarz is *the* story here. What do I do every evening? I live Krzysztof Gonciarz, as Dukaj would say. I walk around Yoyogi Park, run a marathon in London, visit Scotland. I feel Gonciarz's emotions: sadness (when he destroys his drone), pride (when he opens his exhibition at the Manggha Museum in Cracow), fatigue (when he goes home from the gym).

Instastories,⁵⁷ short "stories" in a video format, are the newest form of vlogs. We live celebrities through (their?) experiences and lifestyles: three one-minute micro-forms from the gym, then two memes, one photo of a healthy meal, three more minutes of reflections. Literally millions live them: Cristiano Ronaldo⁵⁸ (one of the best football players in the world) has 177 million followers, Lewis Hamilton⁵⁹ (five-time Formula 1 world champion) has over 12 million followers, and Stephen King⁶⁰ (one of the most popular authors of horror novels in the world) has 1.2 million followers.

In order to describe the next stages of the evolution of post-literate poetics, we must carefully follow new developments and trends in the new media sector (will Snapchat become more popular than Instagram?). They will give rise to new types of communication and new poetics. As Dukaj points out, "What can you do? Follow new trends and fads (...) Perhaps you will be the one who meets Aliens first."⁶¹ The post-literate man will differ from the literate man. Perhaps we will identify him by the poetics of his texts/experiences.

⁵⁶ See: Ireneusz Opacki, "Krzyżowanie się postaci gatunkowych jako wyznacznik ewolucji poezji," *Pamiętnik Literacki*, no. 4 (1963): 349–89. Opacki analyzes Romana Zmorski's *Dziwy*, Leopolda Staff's *Królestwo*, and Franciszek Karpiński's *Podróżny i strumień* and concludes that "the genre has no constant, unchanging, permanent features. First of all, due to 'transformations' which have taken place during its evolution. Secondly, and more importantly, because individual structural features have been assigned different importance, depending on the literary context of the era or a given literary trend" (Opacki, 387.). "We can, however, speak about (...) generic multiformity, insofar as it is possible to trace the presence of older generic characteristics, which at a given stage of development have already lost their generic value, as defined by the literary conventions of the era in which a given characteristic was first conceived (...)" (Opacki, 389.). I think that if we upgrade the language of this text and its textual focus, Opacki's observations remain valid. Of course, it applies to the process of re-medialization.

⁵⁷ O. Jenczek, "Kompletny poradnik jak relacjonować wydarzenia na Instastories", online: <https://sektor3-0.pl/blog/kompletny-poradnik-jak-relacjonowac-wydarzenia-na-instastories/> [date of access: 28 July 2019]. This is one of the many guides we can find on the Internet. The functions of platforms such as Instagram change very often, so the guides are regularly updated. Most often their target audience comprises influencers or commercial entities that use social media platforms for advertisement.

⁵⁸ Online: <https://www.instagram.com/cristiano/> [date of access: 28 July 2019].

⁵⁹ Online: <https://www.instagram.com/lewishamilton/> [date of access: 28 July 2019].

⁶⁰ Online: <https://www.instagram.com/stephenking/> [date of access: 28 July 2019].

⁶¹ Dukaj, *Czarne oceany*, 172–73.

Grand narratives (Dukaj on others)

How does Dukaj rank in relation to similar narratives of recent decades?⁶² Francis Fukuyama in *Our posthuman future*⁶³ warns in a moderately apocalyptic tone against bioengineering that will change human nature, causing social divisions and endangering human rights. Only liberal democracy and the human rights that it guarantees may stop such a scenario. According to Dukaj, Fukuyama created “The last historiosophic futurology with global resonance” (AW, p. 379). Today, we read Yuval Noah Harari’s books.⁶⁴ What makes them so interesting for millions of readers? Why did Harari become a “star” of human sciences?

I think that the answer may lie in the wide variety of topics discussed by Harari and the scale of his narrative. Harari writes about the cognitive, Neolithic, scientific, and the second (future) cognitive revolution. He writes about the effects of global civilization, the end of traditional conflicts, and fake news (as he rightly observes, *homo sapiens* has always lived in the age of post-truth). Two new religions will rule the near future. Techno-humanism (transhumanism) preaches that bioengineering, cyborgization, and new forms of inorganic life will help *homo sapiens* (who has reached the evolutionary breaking point) transform into *homo deus*. It will be the second cognitive revolution. However, Harari is concerned about the deepening of social divisions and predicts that an elite class of privileged superhumans will be formed in the future. Dataism, in turn, is based on the assumption that everything is an algorithm (biological life as well); big data should be processed wisely (ideally, in a dispersed, and not centralized, manner). Biometric data will make it possible for SI algorithms to know man better than he himself does. Soon, art (texts of culture) will be created outside of man, who, as a result of delaborization, will be bored and willing to consume it. Harari also predicts the end of democracy and the emergence of post-liberalism.

Harari’s narrative is accessible; it is a story that is meant to interest the widest possible group of readers, full of colorful metaphors and subtle humor. Harari’s popularity was determined by his adopted strategy of “discovering the truth.” The Israeli historian eloquently builds connections between known facts, which is appreciated by the reader. He is rational and scientific, praising secularism, capitalism, and liberal democracy (he is aware of its flaws, but he believes that it is the only system that can respond to with global challenges of the 21st century).

And while Harari and Dukaj touch on similar topics, the Israeli historian never imposes an interpretation on the vision of the future he describes; he never lets his imagination roam free and never hypothesizes. He evaluates reality, but is not tempted to assess (uncertain) future developments. Dukaj also writes about the past and future history of man, but his narrative

⁶² Dukaj lists the following works: Clinton Richard Dawkins, *The Selfish Gene* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), Nassim Nicholas Taleb, *The Black Swan: The Impact of the Highly Improbable* (London: Taylor and Francis, 2017); Yuval N Harari, *Homo Deus: a brief history of tomorrow*, First Harper Perennial (New York, 2018); Jeremy R. Lent, *The Patterning Instinct: A Cultural History of Humanity’s Search for Meaning* (Amherst, New York: Prometheus Books, 2017); Parag Khanna, *Connectography: le mappe del futuro ordine mondiale* (Roma: Fazi, 2016).

⁶³ Francis Fukuyama, *Our Posthuman Future: Consequences of the Biotechnology Revolution* (New York: Picador - Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007).

⁶⁴ Yuval Noah Harari, *Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind* (London: Vintage, 2019); Harari, *Homo Deus*; Yuval N Harari, *21 Lessons for the 21st Century* (New York: Spiegel & Grau, 2019).

has a clear focus (evolving forms of manifesting experiences). Dukaj's narrative is convoluted, speculative, and quasi-literary; thus, it may appear to be less convincing (and it certainly will be less popular), but it is more inspiring and intriguing. It is exemplified by the style of both writers. This is how Harari writes about terrorism and 9/11:

Hence terrorists resemble a fly that tries to destroy a china shop. The fly is so weak that it cannot move even a single teacup. So how does a fly destroy a china shop? It finds a bull, gets inside its ear, and starts buzzing. The bull goes wild with fear and anger, and destroys the china shop. This is what happened after 9/11, as Islamic fundamentalists incited the American bull to destroy the Middle Eastern china shop. Now they flourish in the wreckage. And there is no shortage of short-tempered bulls in the world.⁶⁵

This is how Dukaj writes about Conrad's *Heart of darkness*:

I do not care for postcolonial discourse and phantom pain of amputated empires. Not my pride, not my burden. Other symmetries of horror interest me in this reliquary of outdated fiction. Nietzsche prophesied and diagnosed existential convulsions after the death of God and Conrad in *Heart of darkness* projected Kurtz's shadow on post-Europe and its future. (AW, s. 176).

Harari uses a simple, yet striking, metaphor to explain how terrorists act. If he were to comment on the issues raised by Dukaj in one paragraph, it would take him a whole chapter. The aesthetic value and the intended readers of both texts differ (one is a popular scientific essay, while the other is a literary essay).

Compelling necessity

In my reading, *After writing* is a literary essay written by a futurist writer who presents his narrative of man's past and future in the context of "(...) language and writing as unnecessary and transient carriers of humanity; and man deprived of subjectivity" (AW, p. 8). The writer also relies on his trademark style (captivating and convincing language, innovations in language, traces of the sublime).

I think Dukaj is right on some level. We can think of humans as those who have the instinct to tell about their experiences and are looking for the best way to express them (experiences are looking for the best way to be expressed). Undoubtedly, the pre-literate man, the literate man, and the post-literate man must be different. And it cannot be denied that our children (born in the first decades of the 21st century) will be completely different from us, because they will not be able to read at the age of four (which happened at the beginning of the 20th century⁶⁶), but they will be able to use the Internet. Indeed, our children will experience others online in the form of audiovisual micro-texts that will be recommended to them by algorithms which will no longer rely on the logic of linear narration (or only rely on it in its liminal stage).

⁶⁵Harari, *21 Lessons for the 21st Century*, 193.

⁶⁶Born in 1908, Teodor Parnicki recalls: "I first appeared in public as one who could read at my father's birthday and ever since I was four years old, I was someone who could read" – Teodor Parnicki, *Historia w literaturę przekuwana* (Warszawa: Czytelnik, 1980), 45–46.

And what about the subjectification of the tool? If life is the object of biological evolution, what is its subject? What does life convey? It is the same force that transmits information in the process of technological evolution, and experiences, as forms of transferring experiences evolve. "What uses us here has no intellect, no intention, no will. It is; that is all that can be honestly said about it" (AW, p. 193). Technology is a tool; it is thus a narrative of emancipation of "tools which mediate between the subject and the object" (AW, pp. 9-10).

I think that, to a large extent, Dukaj's vision is more or less consistent with his other novels. He is still an evolutionist, but not necessarily a progressive one; he is still a nostalgic conservative, but he is no longer such an elitist. Although Dukaj is subjective and speculative (and very convincing; at first, we do not even know how to argue with him), he is also quasi-objective in his vision of future developments; he does not think about the move from literacy to post-literacy in terms of regression. It is progress, insofar as it is a kind of evolutionary necessity, resulting from the technological development of transferring experiences. *After writing* is not the lamentation of a bookworm, nor a eulogy of an Internet user. It is simply a "logical conclusion;" this is how the transfer of information/experiences will evolve. Writing cannot compete with other forms of transfer, just like a paper map cannot compete with a GPS-based system.

Naturally, such a narrative comes at a cost and Dukaj's text is no different. Indeed, it relies too much on totality in its treatment of metaphysics, synthetic trinity, and the tool itself – the now subjectified evolution. At this point, I have to agree with Dukaj's interpretation of Dukaj: his version of transhumanism has never been anthropocentric; it has always been governed by certain necessities. Now, we are reduced/elevated to a figure of the "universal experiencing machine" – it has "no face. No gender. Almost no body. It abandons and assumes identities in stroboscopic spasms" (AW, p. 393).

I wonder. To some extent, *After writing* may be classified as "imaginative literature,"⁶⁷ but perhaps we can find still other labels? While it is immersed in writing (it is obvious), maybe (unconsciously?) it simulates (to the extent it is possible) a post-literate text? Perhaps that is why it relies on a non-linear narrative and moves from one concept to another, following the logic of associations and limiting itself to the books subjectively chosen by Dukaj (did Amazon recommend them)? If that were the case, then *After writing* should not be read (analyzed/interpreted), but experienced. The quality of experience would determine its truthfulness.

So, is this a good book? Yes, because even if Dukaj is wrong, the reader may still enjoy "a jam session of associations and hypotheses" (AW, p. 232). And if Dukaj is right, if his ideas are proven correct, it will mean that *After writing* is indeed a great book.

translated by Małgorzata Olsza

⁶⁷ Dukaj refers to "the linguistic turn" in philosophy and Richard Rorty's writings (see: Dukaj, *Po piśmie*, 310–11., see also: Richard Rorty, "Redemption from Egotism: James and Proust as Spiritual Exercises," *Telos: Revista de Estudios Interdisciplinarios En Ciencias Sociales*, no. 3 (2001): 243–63.). It constitutes another important element of his theory.

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ABSTRACT:

In his latest collection of essays *Po piśmie* [After writing], Jacek Dukaj conceives of human history as an evolution of forms in which man manifests experiences; its final stage is the direct transfer of experiences. The second most important question is the subjectification of the tool. I review earlier realizations of this concept in Dukaj's writings and compare his observations with other contemporary narratives which address the history and future of *homo sapiens* (mainly by Yuval Noah Harari).

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