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Avant-texts – Spatial, Genetic

The avant-text has an extremely interesting ontological status, as it cannot be reduced to the nature of the external world, since it exists in a reciprocal relation with the writer, or to the former psychology of art. It is rather a sphere of – and we cannot use a different term in this context – active transubstantiations and transfigurations..

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Avant-texts – Spatial, Genetic

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The avant-text, one of key categories in textual genetics, has considerable potential for semantic expansion. Avant-texts – which precede the final textual form of literary works – are not only manuscripts or typescripts. Indeed, they may not even be texts, but, for example, experiential avant-forms, such as forms of experiencing space, to which the author continuously refers in his work. The avant-text, by its very nature, is a complex term, comprising multiple unpredictable writerly factors, tendencies, and stimuli. The avant-text has an extremely interesting ontological status, as it cannot be reduced to the nature of the external world, since it exists in a reciprocal relation with the writer, or to the former psychology of art. It is rather a sphere of – and we cannot use a different term in this context – active transubstantiations and transfigurations.

Transubstantiations refer to constant changes in how various phenomena, facts, and elements function. For the individual, they become – suddenly or over a longer period of time – stimuli for writing. They provoke creative gestures and careful artistic shifts from the sphere of the non-literary to the (tentative) figurative. Transfigurations, in turn, refer to the cognitive, mental, and physical process of constant self-structuring of this active “magma” of the proto-literary. It is often the case that the writer, provoked to write, engages with them individually, and one figuration often gives way to other figurations.

This intense examination in poetics and literary criticism, that is often graspable only after the “creative act” comes to an end, sometimes in a very discreet or fleeting way, makes one approach the “avant-text” anew. This is precisely what we explore in this issue of Forum of Poetics. Cezary Rosiński critically examines the problematic situations of spatial attentiveness as stimuli for writing. Hui Zhang, on the other hand, analyzes how travels to China influenced how Chinese culture and state are represented in the works of Boris Pilnyak. Representation varies, depending on “avant-textual” reformulations, which Hui Zhang traces in Pilnyak’s prose. Jerzy Borowczyk studies more typical kinds of genetic avant-texts, investigating how Włodzimierz Odojewski worked on the openings of his works. This is an extremely instructive analysis, as it demonstrates how much work is “invested” into the beginning of a text, which strongly determines the reader’s “first impression”. The role of the avant-textual is prominent. Transubstantiation and transfiguration are hard at work. Łukasz Żurek expands the genetic understanding of avant-texts, analyzing documents that are seemingly non-literary, including the writer’s private notes on the margins of books. The analysis of Stefan Szymutko’s notes allows Żurek to identify readerly avant-texts, i.e. the first writerly/readerly stimuli, which, in the process of transfiguration, made their way into the Silesian philologist’s academic texts. Respectively, Helena Markowska-Fulara argues that questions that Adam Mickiewicz was asked during his M.A. exam at Vilnius University might have been avant-texts of some of his works. A careful comparative analysis of the exam questions and Mickiewicz’s later critical and literary texts demonstrates how this specific avant-text functions in the works of Mickiewicz. Maciej Wcisło analyzes how Józef Wittlin obsessively worked on different editions of Hymny [Hymns]. This passion for modifying and re-creating demonstrates the transubstantiative and transfigurative power of Hymny’s “avant-texts.” Gerard Ronge reviews Barbara Kaszowska-Wandor’s book on the history of the concept of “Res publica litteraria.” Perhaps, the sphere of avant-texts also comprises apt metaphors, which, like (Mieke Bal’s) “travelling concepts,” provoke writing.

It is difficult to judge whether the “avant-text” will become a contemporary “travelling concept,” but it certainly encourages us to examine the sphere of various proto-literary impulses and their ontological status anew. |

translated by Małgorzata Olsza

Spatial Situations of Literature

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Over forty years ago Janusz Sławiński wrote that the umbrella term “space” signifies such varied phenomena that the language of their description cannot be hermetic. Today, after a few decades of attempts at formulating new terms and in spite of intense theoretical and analytical work, the collection of formulae seems to remain incomplete. Literature studies require a few new terms from spatial studies. In this paper I am proposing the term “spatial situations” as a convenient way of capturing literary records of experiencing space. First I will present a concise definition of that concept followed by its methodological justification, and its possible application in literary studies.

A spatial situation is grounded in the attentiveness category, a specific experience of the human subject who is in a concrete geographical location, who shares that location with a place cumulating heterochrony, and who is exposed to the effects of matter.

This concise definition consists of concepts which mutually enlighten each other: the heterotopic nature of space, interpreting the subject in the context of the surrounding materiality, the presence and agency of places in terms of possessing qualities which appear in reality, the interplaying and clashing concepts of significance and presence (both in the case of direct contact with space and mediated by the media materiality of print), and attentiveness as the fundamental quality of human life.

Heterotopia of space

Heterotopia is the central concept of Foucault's *Of Other Spaces*. The French philosopher connects it with changes in the perception of space in the 20th century, when "the site has been substituted for extension which itself had replaced emplacement. The site is defined by relations of proximity between points or elements"¹. The interest in space-related issues makes the 20th century the time of space, which juxtaposes close and distant things, co-existing in dispersion and formulating reality as a combination of points and crossing of tangled branches.

Despite the fact that Foucault did not use that context, it is easy to observe that heterotopia functions also as a medical term: the presence of a particular tissue type at a non-physiological site². The chiasmatic character of heterotopia is hence visible in two dimensions. On the one hand it shows its multidimensionality as a term shared by biology, medicine, architecture, and humanities, and on the other, it lacks integrity, as it refers to both imagined and real, as well as internal and external, spaces. The connective character of heterotopia is based on its "curious property of being connected to all other emplacements, but in such a way that they suspend, neutralize, or reverse the set of relations that are designated, reflected or represented by them"³. For Foucault heterotopias are places like no other,

places that do exist and that are formed in the very founding of society, which are something like counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted. Places of this kind are outside of all places, even though it may be possible to indicate their location in reality. Because these places are absolutely different from all the sites that they reflect and speak about, I shall call them, by way of contrast to utopias, heterotopias⁴.

In the introduction to *Inne przestrzenie, inne miejsca. Map i terytoriów* [Other spaces, other places. Of maps and territories] Dariusz Czaja attempts to explain the specificity of heterotopia, which is constructed from juxtaposed concreteness and imagination, as well as reality and representation, where he considers the social expectations of heterotopias. For example, they were supposed to create the space of illusion which unmasked the real space as a delusion (for example, this is the role of a brothel) or – the casus of colony – create a compensation for our reality. Czaja notes that heterotopias are places which are:

in a way beyond all the other places, although it is possible to locate them. They are significantly different (*heteros*), peculiar. Heterotopias can have various forms and probably it would be difficult to find their universal variant. Heterotopia lies in-between a domesticated and familiar real place

¹ Michel Foucault, „Inne przestrzenie”, translated by Agnieszka Rejniak-Majewska, *Teksty Drugie : teoria literatury, krytyka, interpretacja*, nr 6 (2005): 118. Translation from French into English quoted here by Jay Miskowiec [PZ].

² See more detailed considerations of heterotopia in medicine: Aleksandra Wójtowicz, *Metamorfozy Pałacu Staszica* [metamorphoses of Staszic's Palace] (Warszawa: Instytut Badań Literackich PAN Wydawnictwo, 2017), 172 and the history of the term: Peter Johnson, Brief History of the Concept of Heterotopia, 2012, <https://www.heterotopiastudies.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/Brief-History-of-the-Concept-of-Heterotopia-word-dec-2016-pdf.pdf> [dostęp: 30.09.2020].

³ Foucault, „Inne przestrzenie”, 120. English translation by Jay Miskowiec [PZ].

⁴ Foucault, 120.

(*topos*), and a place deprived of real space, existing as an imagined entity (*ou-topos*). Heterotopia exists, but it exists differently than places which are commonly available, visited and experienced. It remains in a relationship of disparity with the rest of the surrounding space. It functions within it as a different, separate, distinguished entity. It is a crater in the arranged spatial space. Heterotopia is actually “here”, perceptible, tangible, and may become a part of possible experience, although in reality it always remains “elsewhere”. It is an exception to the rule, licensed by culture⁵.

Hence heterotopia is a material place that exists in reality, which apart from its absolute realness is also absolutely unreal, because it can be perceived as different from itself. Thus heterotopia would initially be a place that can be reached, its location easily found on a map, and then visited, but in its second reveal it would become the presence of the absent, non-tangible content of a formally concretized place. Foucault explains this duality effectively on the example of a mirror. Apart from its materiality, it is also a reflection of the surrounding space, thanks to which it becomes its own absence, making another space present⁶. A similar mechanism is created on the theater stage. A separated and tangible surface easily becomes a different place within the space of the theater, materializing artistic contents in a short-lived act of illusion⁷.

The encounter of that spatial indefiniteness with concrete human experience is truly interesting, for it is the external surrounding that “carves and flutes us”, and this is where “the erosion of our lives takes place”. Hence Czaja’s observation regarding the over-static character of heterotopia, understood as unchangeability in terms of time and space, is worth highlighting. The need to shift towards imaginative spaces is explained by logical, inevitable transformations of what is material in Foucault. This idea seems to restore the balance between material and non-material aspects of heterotopia. Czaja brings Foucault’s reflection closer to the Augé⁸ definition dictionary, demanding the presence of the concept of the “transformations of sites”, which make the life of space dynamic, most often by degradation, dysfunctionality, and their destruction⁹.

Out of all the rules explaining heterotopia, meticulously listed by Foucault – 1) there is no culture that does not create heterotopia; 2) society can change heterotopia’s way of functioning; 3) heterotopia can juxtapose many spaces in the same real place; 4) heterotopias are connected with layers of time; 5) heterotopias always assume a system of opening and closure, which simultaneously isolate them and make them penetrable; 6) heterotopias play defined roles in relation to the rest of the surrounding space – there is a temptation for academics to combine the third and fourth rules.

⁵ Dariusz Czaja, “Nie-miejsca. Przybliżenia, rewizje”, [non-places. Close-up’s, revisions] in *Inne przestrzenie, inne miejsca. Mapy i terytoria* (Wołowiec: Wydawnictwo „Czarne”, 2013), 14.

⁶ See Foucault, “Inne przestrzenie”, 120.

⁷ See Foucault, 122.

⁸ See Marc Augé, “Nie-Miejsca. Wprowadzenie do antropologii nadnowoczesności (fragmenty)” [Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity], translated into Polish by Agnieszka Dziadek, *Teksty Drugie: teoria literatury, krytyka, interpretacja*, nr 4 (2008): 127–40; in her text Czaja goes one step further. By juxtaposing heterotopias and non-places she indicates that they are “related to each other in terms of the most important things: recognizing more clearly (...) the distinctness of some fragments of a space that we experience. Distinctness in terms of areas surrounding it. If we deprive non-places of negative values, and provide heterotopias with a chronological parameter, we can bring them closer to each other and use as a useful operational category”: Czaja, “Nie-miejsca. Przybliżenia, rewizje”, 22.

⁹ See Czaja, “Nie-miejsca. Przybliżenia, rewizje”, 18–19. That clearly unequivocally negative dimension of spatial changes is striking, a summary of twentieth-century fate of de-spaced spaces.

I would like to base the fundamental principle of every space (heterotopics) on those two rules. Contrary to Foucault I do not treat heterotopia as a type of space. Instead, I extract the constitutive characteristic from it and assume it to be a component of every space, which thus becomes a warehouse of layers of time. Instead of thinking in terms of models, I would rather think of features, qualities, intentions, characteristics, as well as a way of making present, permeation, exceeding, and appearing. The perspective of radical opening and the attempt at capturing similarities present in the string of different practices are thus founded. Heterotopicity as a constitutive characteristic of Foucault's heterotopia becomes present in every space. Every site – apart from its materiality – thus has the potential to become a different site, such as its own historical version. It collects the material traces of history, which can contribute to numerous virtual spaces, in its realness. I extend the heterotopicity phenomenon to all spaces, assuming that category to be a universal spatial characteristic.

The materiality of reality

If places are connected with passing time, different temporalities can be found in every one. Foucault claims that “we do not live in a homogeneous and empty space”¹⁰, thus directing our attention to both the material aspect of the existence of places and the material dimension of human existence. He forms a similar thought once more: “We do not live inside a void that could be colored with diverse shades of light, we live inside a set of relations that delineates sites which are irreducible to one another and absolutely not superimposable on one another”¹¹. Space is thus both a collection of meanings and a real element of reality, collecting its previous versions or conceptualizations. The experience of heterotopicity can be achieved only when one detaches themselves from traditionally understood time. Only the weakening of presence can permit the palimpsest-like character of space where time accumulates to be revealed,¹² and propose the perspective of being-in-space.

Both Foucault's materiality of space and the material dimension of existence within it brings that position closer to the realist mindset, which assumes that there is a so-called “material culture” next to man, plants, and animals. Hence all existing entities share some purely physical characteristics, and their presence in the world creates a defined difference, also for other entities. These entities, as claimed by Bjørnar Olsen in *In Defense of Things: Archaeology and the Ontology of Objects* “are, of course, different – between and among themselves – extremely varied forms of beings that actually constitute the very basis of collective action”¹³. The realist mindset hence means acceptance of the existence of the material world, whose particular elements constitute the basic and stable foundation of human existence. Objects and places have specific properties which impact and shape not so much the human perception, but rather

¹⁰Foucault, “Inne przestrzenie”, 119.

¹¹Foucault, 119.

¹²Heterotopicity sometimes approaches Bachtin's chronotope, i.e. the inseparability of space and time, and in the literary artistic space-time allowing to bind spatial and temporal features in a meaningful and complete whole. See „Czas i przestrzeń w powieści”, [Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel] translated into Polish by Jerzy Faryno, *Pamiętnik Literacki : czasopismo kwartalne poświęcone historii i krytyce literatury polskiej* 65, nr 4 (1974): 273.

¹³Bjørnar Olsen, Bjørnar Olsen, *W obronie rzeczy: archeologia i ontologia przedmiotów*, tłum. Bożena Mądra-Šhallcross (Warszawa: Instytut Badań Literackich PAN Wydawnictwo, 2013), 19. English version from *In Defense of Things: Archaeology and the Ontology of Objects*, (London: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2010), 9.

people with objects, materials, landscapes and cohabitated spaces¹⁴. To put it simply: objects, places, landscapes and spaces exist independently of man, they are-already-there.

This clearly anti-Cartesian position leads to a shift on two surfaces. The first one shows that the subject is a part of a broader arrangement rather than an observer watching it from a distance. Absorption into the system leads to the second change – the former distance founded on intellectual capabilities is replaced with a heterogeneous network, which includes not only intellectual, but also sensual and material factors. The competences of human corporeality thus grow, and situating it in specific locations is connected to something that we could call subject objectification. The impression that assumes that the human body is the only body in the world, and additionally that a living body moves from one place to another in a way unlimited by other types of beings, is misleading¹⁵. Olsen warns against the anthropocentric perception of materiality. The reflection about the body must include what this body signifies: things to which the body refers and with which it connects, the material components of the world in which it exists¹⁶. The material potential of corporeality should be referred not just to things to which the body is concerned and to which it connects, or to put it simply: among which it exists, but also to places colonized, inhabited, and experienced.

The experience of space must be connected to the phenomenological perception, which assumes two crucial observations: we depend on the world through incorporation into a network of human and non-human entities, and we enter relations with the world both as thinking subjects and corporal objects¹⁷: the Cartesian opposition of passive and inert matter and active and creationism-affected human mind. Our existence is engaged, “we-are-in”.

Space encountered by a physical object exists without it and is prior towards the experience¹⁸ which results from their encounter. Place escapes constant attempts at mediating materiality within human reasoning, hence it is neither a Kantian phenomenon (cognizable “subject of senses”), nor “a thing within itself”, i.e. a transcendent subject about which we can know nothing, nor even Husserl’s intentional object, a result of a phenomenological reduction.

A place as a palimpsest-like structure of accumulating time can be considered a material record of the past. Laurent Oliver, using Bergson’s duration theory, notes that “the present here is made up of a series of past durations that makes the present multi-temporal”¹⁹. The components of space are not just a trace or sediment of distant past, as they are also effectively included in creating and diversifying periods. Olsen observes that objects (and hence places)

¹⁴Olsen, 11.

¹⁵See Olsen, 18.

¹⁶Olsen, 18; it is good to view this issue in the context of Bergson’s “habitual memory”: Henri Bergson, *Materia i pamięć: esej o stosunku ciała do ducha* [Matter and Memory], translated into Polish by Romuald Jakub Weksler-Waszkinel i Marek Drwięga (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Zielona Sowa, 2006), 67 i nast.

¹⁷See Bergson, *Materia i pamięć*, 109.

¹⁸See Graham Harman, *Traktat o przedmiotach* [The Quadruple Object], translated into Polish by Marcin Rychter (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 2013); and Marcin Lubecki, „Grahama Harmana ontologia przedmiotu poczwórnego” [Graham Harman’s ontology of a quadruple object], *Estetyka i Krytyka* 2013, nr 2 (2013): 221–30.

¹⁹Olivier, Laurent, “Duration, Memory and the Nature of the Archaeological Record”, in *It’s about Time. The Concept of Time in Archaeology*, ed. H. Harlsson (Göteborg: Bricoleur Press, 2001), 61.

“make the past present and tangible; they constantly resist the regime that has subjugated time to the prevailing image of it as instantaneous and irreversible”²⁰.

Self-agency of places

Self-agency of matter is not about copying the activity of a subject, but about the unique quality based on indicating own distinctiveness²¹. So what is the specificity of the influence of things? In “*Zwrot performatywny*” *we współczesnej humanistyce* [“Performative turn” in contemporary humanities] Ewa Domańska notes that due to anthropocentric and post-humanist criticism many scholars extend self-agency to non-human entities, but none of the projects is about attributing non-human entities intentionality or replacing human agents with non-human ones, but rather about highlighting a situation in which “changes in reality are an effect of processes and cooperation of various agents”²². By commenting²³ on the actor-network theory by Bruno Latour²⁴, Domańska indicates that intentionality is an element which differentiates the human agency from the self-agency of things. Non-intentional agency of non-human objects would thus rely on intensely observable presence which through its very existence forces human subjects to take a stance. Consequently, a place has no intention of having an impact on man, space does not “assume”, “resolve”, and finally “does not want to influence” the human subject, but through its own material presence it involuntarily becomes an element of a network of co-dependencies and requires establishing relations towards it.

In *Art and Agency* Alfred Gell indicates the mediation of interpersonal relations in matter by taking a closer look at the influence of things and how they refer to people. By defining agency as “relative and context-dependent”²⁵, he is only one step away from including non-human entities in that network. Thanks to that premise agency becomes an involuntary interaction between entities, an invitation to cooperation, a very delicate but observable requirement to “relate-to-me”. The functioning matter, which plays the mediator, is an element of the affordances theory by James Gibson, defined as what the environment offers the individual²⁶. Hence the agency of matter would rely on providing characteristics and willingness-to-act in an unmediated way²⁷. A place’s affordance would thus be responsible for a variety of possibilities which are available in a specific constellation of things. Exploring ruins of a basement is a completely different experience than admiring a city from the highest viewpoint. Both places provide a limited number of perspectives, update different scenarios, expose the subject to different stimuli, and possess different heterotopcities.

²⁰Olsen, *W obronie rzeczy*, 169. English version, pp. 108-109.

²¹See Olsen, 60.

²²Ewa Domańska, „*Zwrot performatywny*” *we współczesnej humanistyce*, *Teksty Drugie : teoria literatury, krytyka, interpretacja*, nr 1–2 (2007): 57–58. Translation mine, PZ.

²³See Ewa Domańska, “Humanistyka nie-antropocentryczna a studia nad rzeczami” [non-anthropocentric humanities and studies into things], *Kultura Współczesna : teoria, interpretacje, krytyka*, No 3 (2008): 19.

²⁴See Bruno Latour, *Splatając na nowo to, co społeczne: wprowadzenie do teorii aktora-sieci* [Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory], translated by Aleksandra Derra (Kraków: Universitas, 2010).

²⁵Alfred Gell, *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory* (Oxford, 1998), 19–22.

²⁶The term first appeared in James J. Gibson, “The Theory of Affordances”, in *Perceiving, Acting, and Knowing: Toward an Ecological Psychology*, edited by Robert Shaw and John Bransford (Hillsdale: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1977), 67–82, and was described in detail in James J. Gibson, *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception* (Hillsdale, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers, 1986).

²⁷See Gibson, *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception*, 127 onwards.

If the abilities of the human subject are limited, and their activity is mediated also through matter which takes a specific location in reality, then – according to Maurice Merleau-Ponty – to move one's body is to aim at things through it; it is to allow oneself to respond to their call, which is made upon it independently of any representation"²⁸. That responsive character can surely be found in the basic characteristic of an object, which according to Martin Heidegger is "readiness-to-hand", i.e. an intuitive ability to use it²⁹:

[The] less we stare at the hammer-thing, and the more we seize hold of it and use it, the more primordial does our relationship to it become (...) 'theoretically', we can get along without understanding readiness-to-hand"³⁰.

Exploiting things and places thoughtlessly, taking advantage of manufactured tools and using them as intended, using places as containers for our everyday activities, all make them invisible. Presence is a different way of existing for them – it embodies itself through the loss of "readiness-to-hand". As Hubert Dreyfus writes³¹, presence is related to some unrest and disruption. When we use things and they function according to our wishes, they are invisible to us, but when they do not and thus cannot serve their purpose, we begin to notice them. A damaged hammer, a flat tire or a rediscovered, long forgotten room attract far more attention than objects and places characterized by "readiness-to-hand". The loss of that quality for objects and making them present are related to the disruption of their present role and activation of heterotopicity as a constitutive quality of space. A place ceases to be the arena of everyday activities, becoming an actuation of what is absent, starts to be noticeable, and grows to become non-obvious, which is just a step away from using the invitation to explore its stratification.

Attentiveness and space

The loss of readiness-to-hand of places is like an invitation. In order to answer it, one has to be attentive. Zofia Król, author of *Powrót do świata. Dziejów uwagi w filozofii i literaturze* [Return to the world. History of attention in philosophy and literature] defines attentiveness as the relationship between the perceiving subject and the perceived object, in which the subject is first of all aware and convinced of the significance of the process of perception, as well as believes that what they experience is the same as what they perceive³². Commenting on that book, Joanna Krajewska observes that "the stakes are much higher than a novel conceptualization, systematic elaboration, attractive interpretations. Attentiveness towards objects constitutes (...) an inalienable quality"³³. *Powrót do świata* directly discusses an elabo-

²⁸Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Fenomenologia percepcji*, translated into Polish by Małgorzata Kowalska and Jacek Migasiński (Warszawa, 2001), 157–58. English version: *Phenomenology of perception*, translated by Colin Smith (London, 2002), 226–7.

²⁹See Martin Heidegger, *Bycie i czas* [Being and Time], translated by Bogdan Baran (Warszawa, 2008), 88.

³⁰Heidegger, 88–89.

³¹See Hubert L. Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-World: A Commentary on Heidegger's „Being and Time”* (Cambridge, 1991), 70–83.

³²See Zofia Król, *Powrót do świata: dzieje uwagi w filozofii i literaturze XX wieku* (Warszawa: Stowarzyszenie Pro Cultura Litteraria : Instytut Badań Literackich PAN. Wydawnictwo, 2013), 10.

³³Joanna Krajewska, "Poza poezją nie ma zbawienia? Kilka pytań do Zofii Król" [there is no salvation beyond poetry? A few questions to Zofia Król], *Forum Poetyki/Forum of Poetics*, No 3 (2016): 97.

rate version of the act of attentiveness, in which the touch with the lost world (also because of temporal distance) is regained, and the object itself can be saved from the effects of time³⁴.

Being attentive means having a surplus of awareness, which assumes being called by the Other. Hence for Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht attentiveness means “openness of the mind to the world (»mind« and »awareness« are more capacious terms than »attentiveness«, defined as a specific function of awareness)”³⁵. Openness to concepts evoked in our mind, as well as to the effects and products of imagination in entanglement with the body and the senses, is an integral part of attentiveness. Similarly to concepts evoked by words under the influence of prosody, i.e. forms of contents, become imagination, i.e. the substance of contents, every situation of attentiveness which allows the capture of certain forms (such as architecture, artifacts of the past) also permits their absorption and transformation into substance. Although it does not mean that the internal time of awareness is stopped or that it is dominated by the indicated contents, it allows the past in our mind to be present in our imagination thanks to the object of attention, not as a meaning, but as a substance³⁶.

There is already something in a space and it should be learned through discovering it meticulously. “Ever since I bought that postcard I have suspected that there is a dormant story in it, a story which none would be able to conceive. A genuine drama, complex and likely painful – a story of mutilation or betrayal, a crime even; we will never know it, even if we suspect its presence”³⁷. Although listening to the material space attentively does not guarantee that we will learn about it, creating it by us and the surrounding senses – even if they do not form our reality – fuse the concrete materiality and actuation of the subject in the world in an act of world-creation. That Bergsonian trait proves that meaning-creation based on the culture of sense and logos will have different sources than world-creation in terms of the creation of some real event, based on encounter, tangibility, but first and foremost on the simultaneous and topographically identical presence of the subject and place.

The above proposals allow to see the kind of attentiveness in the spatial experience which allows to use the heterotopicity of places, thus restoring what is hidden and absent. Of course being sensitive to the agency of matter does not mean a restoration of old forms of places, and neither will it substitute the presence for the past, but it will allow for feeling the presence of what has passed, been lost or is foreign. It happens thanks to the similarity of attentiveness to spells and magical practices³⁸. Hence magic is the predominant function of attentiveness – it actuates things, people, as well as spaces which initially were absent. Gumbrecht searches for an explanation of what actuation is in the traditional theology of Eucharist, “in which Eucharist is a rhythm, magic thanks to which the real presence of God happens”³⁹. For what is Eucharist

³⁴See Król, *Powrót do świata*, 10.

³⁵Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, “Jak podchodzić do «poezji jako rodzaju uwagi?»” [How to Approach Poetry as a Mode of Attention?], translated into Polish by Joanna Krajewska, *Forum Poetyki/Forum of Poetics*, nr 3 (2016): 43. Translated into English by PZ.

³⁶See Gumbrecht, 49.

³⁷Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, *Po roku 1945 : latencja jako źródło współczesności* [After 1945: Latency as Origin of the Present], translated into Polish by Aleksandra Paszkowska (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Krytyki Politycznej, 2015), 40.

³⁸Gumbrecht, “Jak podchodzić do «poezji jako rodzaju uwagi?»”, 44.

³⁹Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, “Użyteczność historii (uobecnianie i odkupienie)” [On the Decent Uses of History], in *Pamięć, etyka i historia. Anglo-amerykańska teoria historiografii lat dziewięćdziesiątych. Antologia przekładów*, edited and translated into Polish by Ewa Domańska (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, 2002), 123.

if not a ritual for creating the genuine presence of God, His real actuation? It is clearly stated that the flesh and blood of Christ transform into substances in the “form” of wine and bread⁴⁰. It is when the words “this is my body” are said when the real presence of God becomes a fact⁴¹.

A play of nuances between producing the “substance of contents”, i.e. imagination connected with a somatic reaction, and “form of contents”, which transforms imagination into knowledge and significance takes place here⁴². It is a reaction which allows the combination of psychosomatic experience with using consolidated meanings and conglomerating what happens before we think with the results of thinking. I think that the intensive experience of spatial attentiveness is powered by both these strategies. Perhaps this is what Król meant when she wrote that “the work of radical attentiveness is thus based also on the return to the lost simplicity of thought, and thus to the closeness of being”⁴³.

Only an attentive subject, substantially co-present with heterotopic space which accentuates both its material aspect and “memories” of past times collected inside, can stand in the face of “the more substantial moments of imagination and past moments which appear as if conjured”⁴⁴. What the reader and observer of space can contribute to its richness is not just “attentive openness to »Being« and imagination before they appeared”⁴⁵, but also creative co-creation of space through various strategies: attentiveness practice, post-memory, memories, premonitions or fantasies.

Spatial attentiveness is about not detaching oneself from the world and striving not towards salvation, but towards fragmentary actuation of a place which reflects the materialized heterotopia in terms of its specificity and shape. Spatial experience means conscious detachment from the readiness-to-hand of the material surroundings, as well as an attempt at capturing the chance to allow a place to present any elements of the accumulated heterochronies. Attentiveness is a sort of sensitivity and focus on details, as well as the will to actively search for something hidden beneath traces left behind by a place; it is following a trail without belittling what actuates itself in that place.

The significance and meaning of space

Olsen writes that material things “do not just sit in silence waiting to be embodied with socially constituted meanings”⁴⁶. Hence he is against the concept that objects and the world without man’s intervention – entities beyond our cognition – are in themselves deprived of meaning, and that they become meaningful only when they are incorporated into our society and intentions⁴⁷. Baudrillard’s conviction that objects become signs, they are consumed as such, and

⁴⁰Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, *Produkcja obecności: czego znaczenie nie może przekazać* [Production of Presence: What Meaning Cannot Convey], translated by Krzysztof Hoffmann and Weronika Szwebs (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM, 2016), 53.

⁴¹Gumbrecht, “Użyteczność historii (uobecnianie i odkupienie)”, 123.

⁴²See Gumbrecht, “Jak podchodzić do «poezji jako rodzaju uwagi?»”, 48.

⁴³Król, *Powrót do świata*, 63.

⁴⁴Gumbrecht, “Jak podchodzić do «poezji jako rodzaju uwagi?»”, 50.

⁴⁵Gumbrecht, 50.

⁴⁶Olsen, *W obronie rzeczy*, 21. [page 10 of the English version]

⁴⁷Olsen, 61.

their essence is the sign's value⁴⁸ is an example of such a way of thinking. For spatial situations this would mean that any created senses would not be in the network of mutual relationship of intentionality of human subjects and the agency of non-human entities, but within a spatialized object. Fear accompanying one's entrance to a ruined, dark basement would not be related to the smell of rotting, dead animals, tangibly damp walls, discomfort connected to its low ceiling, but to the game of associations with cultural texts and own experiences.

The conviction that materiality and reality are deprived of meaning without man's intervention is the basis for this idea. They become meaningful only upon incorporation into some social context. This is why Olsen can write that "when we come across interior decorations, an outfit, a megalith or a landscape, we are confronted with the material mirroring of ourselves, and our social relationships"⁴⁹. Olsen illustrates this idea with a very suggestive example borrowed from Glassie:

A German couple buy a carpet in the covered Bazaar in Istanbul. It becomes a souvenir of their trip to Turkey, a reminder of sun on the beach, and it becomes one element in the décor of their home, a part of the assembly that signals their taste. Their son saves it as a family heirloom. To him it means childhood. Germany replaces Turkey. The weaver's memories of village life give way to memories of an aging psychiatrist in Munich for whom the carpet recalls a quiet moment when he lay upon it and marshaled his bright tin troops on a rainy afternoon. Then his son, finding the carpet worn, wads it into a bed for a dog, and his son, finding it tattered in his father's estate, throws it out⁵⁰.

A trace of the country life, a souvenir from a trip or a childhood memory are ways of "reading" materiality, which on the one hand result from the conviction that reality can be treated as a text, and on the other – that reading depends on the reader and is created in the act of perception. Such an existence of an object and space has its origins in structuralism and poststructuralism, and is related to a conviction that "there is nothing beyond text". It also encourages to combine the world with its textual representation. Thanks to that each element of a space is given formerly assigned signifiers which need to be decoded. Viewing places in such a way is based on de Saussure's concept of the elements of *signifiant*, whereas the material signifier can be characterized by stability, the signified is constantly created by subsequent acts of reading⁵¹. If *signifiant's* role is to make it possible for the *signifié* as the only proper sense, then as a result we have the unusual disproportion between the material and the conceptual which leads to the reconstruction of the *signifiant*; for while the *signifié* is constituted, its *signifiant* disappears as an insignificant element. Despite the whole cognitive process which transforms the *signifiant* into the *signifié*, the material remains present exactly as material – creating meanings does mean neutralizing elements of reality.

The concept described above does not take into consideration the distinctness of materiality or the fact that they possess some independence from the social life of people, "as anyone who has tried to walk a city, sail a boat, or assemble an IKEA bookshelf has experienced, things are

⁴⁸See for example Jean Baudrillard, *Spółczesność konsumpcyjna: jego mity i struktury* [The Consumer Society: Myth and Structures], translated into Polish by Sławomir Królak (Warszawa: Sic, 2006).

⁴⁹Olsen, *W obronie rzeczy*, 61–62.

⁵⁰Henry H. Glassie, *Material Culture* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana Univ. Press, 1999), 58. [page 49 of the English version of Olsen]

⁵¹See Olsen, *W obronie rzeczy*, 81.

not just submissive and plastic beings ready to embody our mental templates or the imperatives of our social wish images⁵². Obviously we do not experience a city, home or landscape in the same way as we read a text. However, this does not mean that intellectual engagement in reading a text cannot be an element of the somatic experience of a space.

Treating the relationship between man and material cultural as an intellectual task close to a conscious reading of signs and texts reduces them to their non-material dimension and deprives them of their distinctiveness. Studying objects and places cannot lead only to uncovering “something more” and treating it as an incomplete representation of the past. Reality, physicality, corporeality, objectivity, and factuality are thus crucial here, which brings us closer to de Saussure’s concept of sign, which we can find in Aristotle’s idea. In Aristotle the concept of sign is based on the difference between the material signifier, which connotes the surface, and the non-material meaning conceptualized as depth. Aristotle combines substance understood as “that what is present, for it requires space” with form, which is “that through which the substance becomes observable”. There is no non-material meaning which releases itself from genesis materialized in the signifier, but giving it back its role allows us to get closer to the meaning⁵³. If only the combination of what needs place with what makes it possible to be visible offers the possibility to “bring our bodies closer”, then accepting the materiality of a place from which the form creates a somatic reaction to a real space cannot be ignored, as it would be in de Saussure’s theory of sign. A place marks through its substance and form.

In *Produkcja obecności* Gumbrecht takes advantage of the theory of sign which rehabilitates the material aspect of meaning, thus making the meaning present also in the material dimension. Presence does not first of all relate to temporal relationships with reality, but to spatial relations – “here” is more important than “now”. Being present means being touchable, and being touched (both physically and metaphorically). The word “production” which completes the title of the book refers to “releasing” an object into some space. However, the author does not mean producing, but rather various processes and events which lead to an increased influence on what is present on human bodies⁵⁴.

One of the tasks that Gumbrecht sets for himself is an attempt at introducing the effects of presence to humanities, dominated by interpretation and meaning, and enslaved by hermeneutics. Thus he decides to lead the reader through over a millennium of the Western culture, which traded presence for meaning. He sees the most vivid example of that cultural transformation of the perception of Eucharist between the catholic and protestant theology:

As a result of several dozen years of theological discussions, the protestant theology redefined the presence of the body and blood of Christ into references to their “meanings”. Gradually “is” in the sentence “this is my body” was supposed to be understood as “it means” or “it replaces” my body. The meaning of Christ’s body and blood referred to the last supper, but it was not supposed to reenact it⁵⁵.

⁵²Olsen, 66. [page 38 of the English version]

⁵³Gumbrecht, *Produkcja obecności*, 53.

⁵⁴Gumbrecht, 23.

⁵⁵Gumbrecht, 53.

For Gumbrecht that symbolic move from “it is” to “it means” becomes the demarcation line between two traditions, which is why he decides to inscribe the two discussed concepts into the dual typology of “the culture of meaning” and “the culture of presence”. However, it is impossible for just one type to appear, hence he advises to consider the ways in which those two models intertwine. Spatial situations are thus powered by both the effects of meaning and the effects of presence.

Gumbrecht claims that first of all, the mind is the original self-reference of man in the culture of meaning, whereas in the culture of presence it is the body. This means that, secondly, the external perception of self in reference to the world is juxtaposed with accepting one’s own body as an integral element of existence. Those observations allow consideration of a spatial situation in the arrangement of everyday life. However, that unequivocal reading problematizes the third point, in which Gumbrecht points out that in the culture of meaning knowledge is created in the act of interpreting the world, whereas in the culture of presence it is typically revealed – “it just happens”. What brings spatial situations closer to the presence-related conceptualization of knowledge is the fact that knowledge does not have an exclusively concept-like character, and that it appears as a ready substance which does not require interpretation understood as modifying the meaning. That discrepancy reminds the double-phased character of spatial experience, during which the initial exposure to the effects of a place which presents itself in its materiality by its own presence can be completed by an intellectual attempt at analyzing its elements and relating it to the existing cultural meanings. Hence the (very important) fourth point – a spatial relation can be constructed from two different concepts of a sign. In de Saussure’s culture of meaning we deal with the two-element sign which consists of the signifier and the signified. In the process of decoding a sign the material signifier is no longer of interest as soon as the signified is recognized. Presence operates on Aristotle’s definition of sign, according to which it connects substance and form. The combination of the thing that requires a place with what makes it visible makes it possible “for our bodies to be closer”. Accepting the materiality of a place which – even after the first, very somatic reaction to the real space – does not stop being interesting and is still present, allows to see substance and form in it. And that is the reason why – fifthly – spatial experience allows the writing of one’s own body into a wider order of instabilities of material things. The perception of the presence of what is foreign shows that continuity can be abruptly disrupted, that the sequence of events does not have to build a harmonious vision of the whole, an action, or – as Gumbrecht would like – “transformation” which assumes a collection of unchangeable qualities prone to improvement or beautification. The “action” of meaning is juxtaposed with the “magic” of presence understood as making the absent present (like two different spaces appearing in the same heterotopic place). And this is why – sixthly – for the culture of presence, space is the dimension where any relations are laid down in reality.

His seventh point is difficult to consider in the context of spatial situations, according to which in the culture of presence corporal relations can transform into the violence of bodies against other bodies. Violence is one of the terms that Gumbrecht redefines in *Produkcja obecności*⁵⁶, which is why it should be considered to be an irremovable element of any relation based on presence. In this sense violence understood as a direct physical impact of a corporal

⁵⁶On a redefinition of this and other concepts see Tomasz Mizerkiewicz: “Ku manifestacji. Hansa Ulricha Gumbrechta problematyka obecności” [Towards manifestation: the problem of everyday life in H.U. Gumbrecht], in: *Produkcja obecności: czego znaczenie nie może przekazać* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM, 2016), 13.

form in a way approaches the conceptualization of interpersonal relations of existentialists who defined every attempt at a contact between two entities as a executioner-victim relation⁵⁷. On the other hand, the culture of meaning is characterized by permanent suspension of real violence and transforming it into power.

The topic of point eight is the term of situation or situationality, which in the culture of meaning is related to innovativeness and the effect of surprise – unpredictability of a sort. Gumbrecht seems to extend the category of situationality in such a way as to allow for the expected or even desired transformations. In other words, any lack of continuity related to the actuation of a situation “hits us” even when we do not expect it⁵⁸.

In the ninth point he discusses the official or everyday culture and its negation. In the culture of meaning games and fiction play that role, they introduce rules in lieu of the motivation of the participants of that process. In the culture of presence a carnival is the negative of everyday relations, as an exception which “proves to be full of chaos, contradicting and pointless elements”⁵⁹.

A spatial situation would thus be a quasi-magical ritual, which thanks to the physical presence of materiality in the form of a corporal subject and realist space allows the formalized substance of a place to become present only as a central part of a future situation. During a spatial situation a real, stratified presence is created, similar to a palimpsest. A spatial situation, although so strongly related to the culture of presence, is also powered by sign elements in the form of intellectual attentiveness and extra-material knowledge about places. What is only an experience of presence in its initial character can prove to contribute to further searches powered by the effects of meaning.

Presence is always marked by absence. Torn between existing and not existing, it is necessarily ephemeral, which means that in a culture which is mostly based on meaning, it can only exist in the form of “effects” of presence. It is thus impossible not to notice that presence and meaning appear together, and that there is always some tension between them. Again, this is Foucault’s “epoch of simultaneity, epoch of juxtaposition, the epoch of the near and far, of the side-by-side, of the dispersed”⁶⁰. Of course appearing together does not mean being complementary. We are immersed in the space of constant struggle and fighting over human activity by the two forces.

Similarly, to the case of the effects of presence which do not disappear under the pressure of meaning trying to annihilate material elements of reality, the physical presence is unable to extinguish the dimension of meaning. It is not about a stable structure of a pattern in which the meaning and presence appear next to and complement each other, but about the constant movement between the effects of presence and meaning which creates anxiety and – through its internal instability – provides the object of experience with a subversive quality⁶¹. This means that spatial situa-

⁵⁷See Jerzy Kossak, *Egzystencjalizm w filozofii i literaturze* [existentialism in philosophy and literature] (Warszawa: Książka i Wiedza, 1971), 42.

⁵⁸See Gumbrecht, *Produkcja obecności*, 101.

⁵⁹Włodzimierz Bolecki, “Język. Polifonia. Karnawał” [language, poliphony, carnival], *Teksty : teoria literatury, krytyka, interpretacja*, nr 3 (1977): 19.

⁶⁰Foucault, „Inne przestrzenie”, 117. English version by Jay Miskowiec.

⁶¹Gumbrecht, *Produkcja obecności*, 123.

tions would not just be an example of “intensity moments”⁶², in which Gumbrecht combines the quantitative surplus with temporal fragmentation and explains that these are moments which offer “a sense of a high level of functioning (...) of cognitive, emotional, and maybe even physical powers” instead of a message and knowledge, but they would also exist as their negative. Spatial situations which are “processes of extensiveness” are an attempt at fighting the effects of presence by the effects of meaning, a fleeting victory of cognitive functions, reasoning, associations, knowledge and intellect, as well as an occasion to build a message and learn something new through conceptual work. It is only the simultaneous duality of meaning and presence that reveals our true relationships with space. This sensible and inclusive position of Gumbrecht encourages the rethinking of the consequence created by the exclusive dominance of the Cartesian worldview.

And what about literature?

It is impossible to imagine humanities practices without interpretation. As an elementary and possibly inevitable intellectual practice it is crucial. However, this does not mean that it is impossible to propose such a network of concepts which would allow humanities to refer to reality in a more complex way than only through assigning meaning to the world⁶³. Hence it is no coincidence that in the subtitle to his book Gumbrecht indicates those humanities phenomena which are in no way “transferable” via meaning. The difficulties resulting from that revolutionary change in the way of thinking against which Gumbrecht warns us are related to accusations of philosophical naivety and non-scientificity of terms such as “substantialism”, “reality” or “Being”⁶⁴. How shall we then refer to the world differently?

Opening a new line in contemporary humanities in reference to literary studies would mean an attempt at answering questions concerning the existence of literature taking place without the issue of interpretation, but with its temporal suspension; about the possibility of knowledge that came to be not via an act of interpretation, but through the possible agreement between learning about the world through concepts and observing it with senses⁶⁵, or maybe even based on presence; about the materiality of communication and connecting the semantic complex with how it appears on a printed page; about using presence as an opportunity to form new terms and go beyond the tautological “something that is, is”⁶⁶.

In a way Gumbrecht encourages to view literature as – *nomen omen* – a space which, instead of abandoning and forgetting, tries to propose a relation with the world based on presence. Viewed in

⁶²In the concept of “intensity moments” we can see a clear influence of Merleau-Ponty. In experiencing things he saw a “full” corporal experience, which cannot be achieved via contemplation or “putting our everyday and complicated co-habitation with objects in brackets”, Olsen *W obronie rzeczy*, 204; Due to the physical similarity the human body involuntarily initiates direct relations with objects. Only body “can lead us to things, which themselves are not flat entities, but rather deep, inaccessible for the subject high above the world, open only to such a subject (...) which coexists with them in that world”, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Widzialne i niewidzialne*, translated by Małgorzata Kowalska (Warszawa: Fundacja Aleitheia, 1996), 140, translated into English by PZ.

⁶³See Gumbrecht, 73.

⁶⁴See Gumbrecht, 73–74.

⁶⁵See Gumbrecht, 62–63.

⁶⁶See Gumbrecht, 12–13, 37.

this way, literature will be treated as a place where the effects of presence and the effects of meaning clash with each other. However, this is not everything, for the reception of literature (I do not use the term “reading” here on purpose) has to obey the same rules. Writing about literature is then naturally obliged to accept the aspect of presence, realizing itself through repetitions dictating the rhythm of writing and reading, intrusive (like the material presence) return to the same motifs, intertwining arranged argumentation with articulated intuition. A conventional story, the presence of analysis and interpretation and following narrative rules will sometimes have to give way to networks and constellations, a sense of being close or far away, simultaneity (even in the form of numerous attempts at reading the same text or multiple application of similar tools or concepts), and literature translations, contexts, references and motifs will bond repetitions and returns.

An attempt at a different reception of literature would be related to a temporary suspension of interpretation in favor of presence – difficult to capture and define, present only in “moments of intensity”. This would thus lead to an attempt at rooting art in substance whose form appears and disappears. In such a conceptualization literature would be close to fireworks exploding in the sky, which appear only to disappear a moment later. Literature understood as Adorno’s *apparition* is a phenomenon: if apparition means a flash, a fleeting touch, then the picture is a paradoxical attempt at capturing what is the least durable. Transcendence of a moment takes place in works of art⁶⁷. Commenting on Adorno’s aesthetics, Karol Sauerland stresses that the distinctness related to phenomenality rather than an image of art, every so often reaching the world of our imagination⁶⁸, still remains elusive, since it is only a premonition of the Non-existing.

The presence of spatial issues in literary studies, which are interdisciplinary by definition, has to be related to a view allowing a transfer of knowledge from the analysis of fictional or biographical places to the real space and experiencing it, as well as using spatial relations which take place both within and beyond literature⁶⁹. The dependence is thus mutual, although its complexity is not realized in a simple mutual exchange. A relation can take the form of refraction and treat literature as a prism⁷⁰, which transforms authentic places into a literary one, or assumes that specific places become a creative space which allows literary activity, or assume the complementary character of literature and space, and literature and place. Opening literature studies to such a perspective allows for a new and constructive reading of literature.

The spatial reflection of spatial situations is an attempt at creating concepts which give humanities a chance to refer to the world in a more complex way than by assigning meaning to it⁷¹. Hence we are talking about mechanisms that go beyond thinking of literature as “the other reality”, an autonomous form of life. It is about accepting the entity dependency of literature on materiality, not about reflecting an epoch and society in signs or the indissolubility

⁶⁷Theodor W. Adorno, “Ästhetische Theorie”, in *Gesammelte Schriften*, t. 7 (Frankfurt am Main, 1972), 130; See also Karol Sauerland, “Kilka pojęć z estetyki Theodora W. Adorno” [a few concepts from Adorno’s aesthetics], translated into Polish by Wołkowicz, A., *Miesięcznik Literacki*, No 7 (1981): 52.

⁶⁸Sauerland, “Kilka pojęć z estetyki Theodora W. Adorno”, 53.

⁶⁹See postulates of spatial studies with the use of literary studies: Wójtowicz, *Metamorfozy Pałacu Staszica*, 186 i nast.

⁷⁰It is Robert Packard’s idea, see Elżbieta Rybicka, *Geopoetyka : przestrzeń i miejsce we współczesnych teoriach i praktykach literackich* [geopolitics: space and place in contemporary theories and literary practices] (Kraków: Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych „Universitas”, 2014), 36.

⁷¹See Olsen, *W obronie rzeczy*, 73.

of aesthetics and social reality. Hence instead of the independence of an aesthetic experience, which is becoming the rule of the new form of collective life⁷², we should look for a linkage of an aesthetic experience and its spatial and material basis.

Using the category of presence means not just abandoning the Cartesian division into the subject of cognition and the cognizable reality, but also resigning from being closed by the problems of language, narration and the autonomy of the represented world. Accepting the material and spatial reality which is present before a work of literature, accompanying its creation and reception, permits the formation of fresh and inspiring theses. Such suggestions can be found in Paweł Tomczok's excellent paper, *Realność pośrednika*⁷³ [The reality of a mediator], whose main goal is to present alternative proposals to current narrative studies. Tomczok aims at changing the mentalistic paradigm to a realist model which offers a new theory of storytelling, taking into account the important role of objects co-creating narration. Alienating materiality during reading makes literature detached from reality and closed in a system governed by its own rules⁷⁴.

Tomczok wants literary studies to consider the “dummy-like” character of the represented world of every work of literature, as well as the hidden materiality or corporeality of the narrator, making itself present on the basis of Heidegger's secrecy. His proposal thus supports reading literature to be understood as participating in situations of spatial attentiveness proposed by it, as for a scholar such a space and its potential for situational openings are real, and so is the narrator and shaping attentiveness of someone who deals with a model of the real world.

Allowing for literature's ways to refer to the world in another way than via meaning – and hence introducing on the stage of literary studies concepts unequivocally implying materiality and presence to appear in philological reflection – does not have to mean philosophical naivety. An attempt at introducing being, presence, agency of non-human entities, or finally spatial situations combining those categories to literature studies, implying the possibility of returning to Aristotle's substance⁷⁵, has a chance to lead to a theoretical breakthrough, which will allow better understanding and experience of the network of dependencies between literature and everything that surrounds it.

translated by Paulina Zagórska

⁷²On the subject of the relationship between aesthetics and social reality and literature as “symptomatology of society, opposing the noise and illusion of the public sphere”, see Jacques Rancière, *Dzielenie postrzegalnego: estetyka i polityka* [The Politics of Aesthetics], edited by Magda Pustola i Kuba Mikurda, translated by Maciej Kropiwnicki and Jan Sowa (Kraków: Korporacja Ha!art, 2007), 50–98.

⁷³Paweł Tomczok, “Realność pośrednika”, *Forum Poetyki/Forum of Poetics*, No15–16 (2019): 6–23.

⁷⁴See Tomczok, 21.

⁷⁵See Gumbrecht, *Produkcja obecności*, 73–74, 96.

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KEYWORDS

heterotopicity of space

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ABSTRACT:

The paper discusses the category of spatial situation – a specific experience of the human subject based on the concept of attentiveness, which is located in a specific geographic location, shares that location with a place accumulating heterochrony and is subject to the agency of matter. The term is considered in the light of Michel Foucault's heterotopia, the return to materiality of Bjørnar Olsen and the culture of meaning and culture of presence of Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht.

attentivness

culture of meaning and culture of presence

AGENCY OF MATTER

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Struggling with the Opening.

The Avant-text of Selected Short Stories by Włodzimierz Odojewski (Based on Materials from his Poznań Archive)

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According to French text geneticists, collecting “genesis documents” is of key significance to the process of working with rough copies (manuscripts and typescripts) of works by a given author. Pierre-Marc de Biasi says that it is the decisive stage for the whole process, since all the studies and the quality of expected results largely depend on the completeness of the collected material and the clarity of identifying its particular elements¹. My experiences with the genesis *dossier* of short stories, novels and Munich radio broadcasts (literary-cultural programs broadcast in Radio free Europe in the 1970s and 1980s) by Włodzimierz Odojewski² make me agree completely with this observation. As a reader of short stories selected

¹ P-M. de Biasi, *Genetic Criticism*, translated into Polish by F. Kwiatek, M. Prussak, Warsaw 2015, p. 53. [translation into English by PZ]

² Włodzimierz Odojewski's Archive at the Faculty of AMU Polish and Classical Studies in Poznań, which consists of several thousand pages donated to AMU by Odojewski in late 2010s.

from *Zabezpieczenie śladów* [Securing traces] (Paris 1984), *Zapomniane, nieuśmierzone* [Forgotten, unconsolated] (1987) and *Jedźmy, wracajmy* [Let's go, let's return] (extended version from 2000)³, end especially as an investigator of the formation of key motifs from the stories in question throughout subsequent rough copies and typescripts, I can state that the richness of the source material allowed me to realize the crucial role that subsequent (typically over a dozen) attempts at editing first the seeds of the stories, and later subsequent parts of expanding texts, played in their creation⁴. Moreover, dissecting the avant-texts of selected stories based on collected materials provided me with strong impulses for new (or at least revised and enriched) interpretations.

In this study I decided to analyze three short stories by Włodzimierz Odojewski from a genetics-textual perspective: *Ku Dunzynańskiemu Wzgórzu idzie las* [The forest is walking towards the Dunsinane Hill] (from *Zabezpieczanie śladów*), *Co słycać w ojczyźnie* [What's the news from the motherland] (*Zapomniane, nieuśmierzone...*) and *Sezon w Wenecji* [A season in Venice] (second edition of *Jedźmy, wracajmy*). I selected those stories due to the rich collection of their rough copies in the Poznań archive, as well to the interesting writing genealogy of those texts. Texts written between 1976 and 1999 attracted my attention. While writing them, Odojewski was thinking about the bigger collections which were supposed to include them, which means that while he was writing each of those stories, he reached for texts he had written in the early 1960s (often abandoned already at the stage of rough copies, unfinished in terms of composition and content) and wrote new texts. For the artist, it was a time of intense (though interrupted) and eventually not finalized work on the so-called Berlin novel, which was supposed to be the culmination of the Podolski cycle⁵. When one browses through subsequent files containing the legacy of the author (which he himself put together, provided with initial descriptions and in that form they were donated to the archive of the Faculty of Polish and Classical Studies of AMU), it is very clear that Odojewski wrote practically incessantly, and that the process of writing was always accompanied by immersion in his own archive, which must have strongly influenced the editing of those works which he had started and put aside, as well as the writing of new ones.

³ W. Odojewski, *Zabezpieczanie śladów*, Paris 1984; W. Odojewski, *Zapomniane, nieuśmierzone...*, Berlin 1987; W. Odojewski, *Jedźmy, wracajmy i inne opowiadania*, Warsaw 2000.

⁴ De Biasi points out other possible ingredients of "genesis documents" – correspondence, an intimate journal, sketches, drawings, notes from books (P.-M. de Biasi, p. 52), i.e. any other activities of the author (literature-related and others) while working on a studied text. In the case of Odojewski the number of such materials is varied depending on when he wrote a given text. In the case of the texts analyzed here, the documentation from *Ku Dunzynańskiemu Wzgórzu idzie las* is unusually extensive (mostly because it is about Katyń and that the short story was printed by the Institute of Literature in Paris, which entails a long correspondence between the author and Jerzy Giedroyc from the time when the collection was written, and rich editing documentation – everything is stored in the Archive of the Institute and Parisian "Culture" in w Maisons-Lafitte). When it comes to the *dossier* of the genesis of *Co słycać w ojczyźnie* and *Sezon w Wenecji* the documentation is limited to rough copies stored in the Poznań archive.

⁵ See M. Rabizo-Birek, *W poszukiwaniu Katarzyny. Ostatnie dwa ogniwa cyklu podolskiego (cz. I)* [in search for Katarzyna. The final two parts of the Podolski cycle (p. I)], in: *Zabezpieczanie śladów. Wokół życia i twórczości Włodzimierza Odojewskiego* [securing traces. About the life and works of Włodzimierz Odojewski], edited by A. Przybyszewska and D. Nowakowska, Poznań 2018, p. 13-24 and M. Rabizo-Birek, *W poszukiwaniu Katarzyny. Ostatnie ogniwa cyklu podolskiego (cz. II)* [in search for Katarzyna. The final two parts of the Podolski cycle (p. II)], in: *Zapomniane, nieuśmierzone... Pamięć, zapomnienie, trauma w twórczości Włodzimierza Odojewskiego* [forgotten, unconsolated... Memory, oblivion, trauma in the works of Włodzimierz Odojewski], edited by A. Przybyszewska and D. Nowakowska, Poznań 2020, p. 151-198.

One piece of evidence to support this hypothesis: there are many clues suggesting that the texts that were to enter the collection *Zabezpieczenie śladów* were already completed in 1983, whereas Odojewski probably started working on them at two completely different moments. The first one is early 1960s, especially 1963, when he was working on the novel *Cień wielkiej równiny* [The shadow of the great plain], out of which he extracted some of his short stories (Magdalena Rabizo-Birek⁶ writes about that in great detail). To me, the second moment, i.e. the turn of 1970s and 1980s, is more significant, due to the intensification of the author's interest in the subject of Soviet labor camps, deportations from Kresy deep into the Soviet Union, and returning to the theme of Katyń. The last three short stories from *Zabezpieczanie śladów*: *Pod murem* [Against a wall], *Ku Dunzynańskiemu Wzgórzu idzie las* and *W stepie, ostach i burzanie* [An grasslands, thistle and weed], are dated to 1980, 1981, 1983⁷, respectively. And the decisive phases of writing the cycle *Zabezpieczanie śladów* should be placed among them, whereas in the case of *Ku Dunzynańskiemu Wzgórzu idzie las* it is the years 1980-1981⁸.

Spending over four years with the materials from Odojewski's archive made me realize that the dream, necessary, and planned genetic edition⁹ of one of the collections of short stories referred to in this paper requires years of further work. Even to arrange the rough copies of a given text (which are always over a hundred pages long) is an exceptionally complex and tedious task in the case of Odojewski. However, such an initiative is by all means necessary, as proven by observations made 30 years ago (without access to Odojewski's archive!, only based on reading his texts carefully and analyzing his book editions) by Wojciech Tomasik. The scholar highlighted that "anyone interpreting Odojewski cannot renounce the competences of a textologist", indicating "the constant corrections, introducing changes to subsequent editions and dissimilating different variants of a given text"¹⁰. Tomasik's observation regarding Odojewski's works as "entangled [...] in the creative process", and, consequently, making the reader highlight their "literary nature", is exceptionally accurate¹¹.

⁶ Por. M. Rabizo-Birek, *Między mitem a historią. Twórczość Włodzimierza Odojewskiego* [between myth and history. Works of Włodzimierz Odojewski], Warsaw 2002, p. 81-141.

⁷ These dates appear for the first time in the Polish edition – W. Odojewski, *Zabezpieczanie śladów*, Warsaw 1990. However, Odojewski placed them under subsequent stories in his author's copy of the Paris edition, which is a part of his Poznań archive with a note "copy with corrections". Interestingly, in handwritten notes with dates under *Pod murem* and *Ku Dunzynańskiemu...* traces of hesitation and corrections can be found. In the case of the former the author originally wrote, as can be deduced, "1981", and then corrected the last digit to "0". As to the latter, first there was 1980, and then the author changed the last digit: 1981. On a separate note, I would like to add that author's copies of two subsequent editions of *Zabezpieczanie śladów* from 1984, 1990, 2009 also belong to the archive. The first two of them contain numerous corrections and additions, also regarding *Ku Dunzynańskiemu Wzgórzu idzie las*. According to de Biassi these materials should be classified as print genetics (P-M. de Biassi, p. 50-52) and treated as continuous manifestations (despite the first printing) of the text-forming process. Due to limitations of space, this phase of the genetics-textual procedure is beyond the scope of this paper.

⁸ One more significant observation (inspired by Rabizo-Birek) – an obsessive-systematic overview of various literary and documentary testaments regarding labor camps and deportations, which interested Odojewski in terms of his radio podcasts, became one source of inspiration in the case of stories written from 1980 and 1983 (*Pod murem*, *Ku Dunzynańskiemu Wzgórzu...* and *W stepie, w ostach i burzanie*). In addition, there was also Katyń, which appears in numerous texts from the camp-Russia cycle, and further fuelled by an anniversary of the war crime (1980). In *Między mitem a historią* Rabizo-Birek writes about Katyń and labor camp apocrypha (see M. Rabizo-Birek, *Między mitem...*, p. 90-141).

⁹ See P-M. de Biassi, p. 113-132 for different forms and characteristics of "genetic editions".

¹⁰ W. Tomasik, *Odojewski: literatura bliska wyczerpania* [literature on the verge of exhaustion]. In *Odojewski i krytycy. Antologia tekstów* [O. and critics. An anthology], edited by S. Barć, Lublin 1999, p. 242-243. The first copy of the paper appeared in "Teksty Drugie" 1991, No 1-2, p. 133-153.

¹¹ Ibidem, p. 244.

Tomasik's observation that the basic genre of Odojewski's writing is "a collection of short stories – a literary form which harmonizes well with the technique of variants and supplements"¹² – seem especially important to me in the context of my attempts here. He continues about "deliberate and consistent"¹³ self-repetitions, which ultimately make Tomasik classify Odojewski's short prose forms as "poetics of etudes", characterized by "unreadiness, non-independence, and internal repetitiveness", as well as concerning "measures taken in the process of forming the text and the multi-textual whole", which permits acceptance as a demonstration of "the plan of the author's biography"¹⁴. The formal accurateness of Odojewski's stories captured by Tomasik assisted my work with the exceptionally extensive rough copies documentation of the initial parts of short narrative forms by Odojewski from the three collections mentioned above, which can be found in the files of his Poznań archive.

2. "...from the darkness of the very beginnings"¹⁵, i.e. what hides behind sophisticated incipits

The effort required in trying to control the number and complexity of Odojewski's attempts at incipits, first paragraphs and pages of many short stories written in 1976-1999 made me compare those various editions with the memorable, master beginnings of Odojewski's greatest prose achievements – first and foremost with the first paragraph of his debut *Wyspa ocalenia* [Island of salvation], or the third (Katyń) chapter from the first volume of *Zasypie wszystko, zawieje* [It will bury everything, it will blow]. Here are the initial three sentences of *Wyspa ocalenia*:

Not even the slightest shadow. Light brown, naked slope was glaring, reflecting the sun, measurelessly empty, excluding any suspicion of ever having anything to do with life with its very looks. The burning blow of eastern wind withered among the rocks and the silence was no longer interrupted; it contained perfect nothingness¹⁶.

Motionlessness, heat, silence expressed in sentences whose style and rhythm has to be associated with poetry, and echoes through subsequent editions of the first sentences of the short stories that I studied. They are not saturated with as strong a sense of emptiness and nothingness, yet they remain closely related to a peculiar state of inertia and paralysis emanating from Odojewski's first novel. In her paper on the procedure of beginning and development in Odojewski's prose, Inga Iwasiów indicates the fundamental factor in these seemingly self-contained, self-alienating opening paragraphs of his texts: "The obsession of dwelling on selected, basic, and at the same time ultimate topics reveals itself both intensely and subtly, making the reader analyze the arcs, motifs, particular sequences with great

¹²Ibidem, p. 245.

¹³Ibidem.

¹⁴Ibidem, p. 249-250.

¹⁵From the avant-text (rough copy) of *Sezon w Wenecji*, to which I will refer later in the text.

¹⁶W. Odojewski, *Wyspa ocalenia*, ed. T. Burek, Białystok 1990, p. 15.

precision¹⁷. If so, this study should limit itself to defining the avant-texts of the beginnings of the three selected short stories, to try to capture the stylistic-semantic transformations revealing themselves in the subsequent phases of the text-forming process of those literary openings, as well as the premises for (re)interpretation of the definite (printed) wholes that emerge from them.

When text genetics was born, one of its founders, Jean Bellemin-Noël, warned against the illusion of complete objectivity in reference to the “*description of the work of an avant-text*”¹⁸. He believed that it is impossible to present the constant transformations made during and due to editing, hence the level of analysis should be defined, samples should be taken on each level, and particular moments in which a word or a whole sentence simultaneously causes a local metamorphosis and is subject to it should be highlighted¹⁹.

In the present paper the avant-texts of the openings of three short stories will be such samples and moments, becoming a subject of a micro-analytical procedure, so frequently practiced – as stressed by Adam Dziadek – by text geneticists²⁰. Whereas de Biasi, presenting his method of work on the evolution of the first sentence of *The Legend of Saint Julian the Hospitaller* by Gustav Flaubert, uses the formula of microgenesis²¹.

3. What do the rough copies of the first paragraphs reveal? Studies into three examples

The files in which Odojewski stored the materials from writing and editing the three short stories in question are almost completely deprived of all hints as to when subsequent manuscripts and typescripts were written, and the sequence of pages in particular collections is often significantly disrupted. Hence the basic task is to determine the avant-text of the initial paragraph of the selected short stories, i.e. recreate it based on the collection of manuscripts and typescripts of the sequence of inter-related and mutually-supportive sub-processes whose chain creates the picture of the whole²². At the same time, I have to bear in mind – as stressed by Jean Levaillant – that they cannot take place in the shadows and due to the final version of the text, but with the assumption that they are a different quality and that they do not tell the «correct» genesis story as much as they reveal the violence of conflicts, the price of choices, impossible endings, nodes, censorship, and revealing tensions²³.

¹⁷I. Iwasiów, *Początek i rozwinięcie, czyli porządek i chaos w twórczości prozatorskiej Włodzimierza Odojewskiego* [beginning and development – order and chaos in the prose of Włodzimierz Odojewski], in: *Formy i strategie wypowiedzi narracyjnej* [narrative forms and strategies], ed. Cz. Niedzielski and Jerzy Speina, Toruń 1993, p. 174.

¹⁸J. Bellemin-Noël, *Tekst i przed-tekst. Bruliony wiersza Oskara Miłosza (fragmenty)* [text and avant-text. Rough copies of a poem by Oskar Miłosz (fragments)], translated from French into Polish by K. Krzyżosiak, “Forum Poetyki” 2020, *Le texte et l'avant-texte: les brouillons d'un poème de Milosz* (Paris: Librairie Larousse, 1971).

¹⁹Ibidem.

²⁰Dziadek, Adam. „Poetyka i genetyka (tekstów)” [poetics and genetics (of texts)]. *Forum Poetyki* 2020.

²¹P.-M. de Biasi, p. 163.

²²P.-M. de Biasi, p. 50.

²³J. Levaillant, *Écriture et génétique textuelle. Valéry à l'œuvre*, Lille 1982, cited in: P.-M. de Biasi, p. 139.

3.1. *Ku Dunzynańskiemu Wzgórzowi idzie las* – Suspension of consciousness

The edition of the beginning of *Ku Dunzynańskiemu Wzgórzowi idzie las* consists of the most extensive, impressive collection of rough copies (manuscripts and typescripts) among short stories selected for this study. Generally, Odojewski put the rough copies (manuscripts and typescripts) of the story in three files (2, 3 i 7)²⁴, which are a part of a bigger whole – the documentation of the collection *Zabezpieczanie śladów* (12 files). The three files related to *Ku Dunzynańskiemu Wzgórzowi* consist of 521 A4 pages (typically two-sided).

My observations concern the complete shape of the initial paragraph of *Ku Dunzynańskiemu...*, which – more broadly – tells the story of obscuring the Soviet war crime from 1940.

A careful analysis of the materials²⁵ comprising the avant-text of *Ku Dunzynańskiemu Wzgórzowi* allows to determine that the manuscripts and typescripts from file 3 document the earliest phase of the creative process – a long process of incubation, with many attempts. File 2 consists of typescripts documenting the middle phase – Odojewski already had the basic framework of the story and was working on subsequent transformations (additions, deletions) and corrections. File 7 mirrors the final phase of the work, when the story was prepared for print.

A genetic analysis of the first paragraph should be preceded by more general observations concerning both the printed version (the first printing of the Paris edition is from 1984), as well as several characteristics of subsequent editions in the earliest phase (file 3).

The published text of the story allows to distinguish three basic sequences (regarding story arcs and text), which I dubbed “Berlin 1”, “Geneva”, and “Berlin 2”, thus reflecting significant story turns related to subsequent changes of settings. The first sequence comprises the meeting of the Journalist with the Professor in the latter’s West Berlin apartment and focuses on the fact of secretly recording of the communist diplomat’s story of a Katyń survivor, whom he had met in the red underground army in Belarus. Next, the Journalist flies to the Geneva headquarters of his magazine, where he listens to the recordings of the so-called “Character’s” story in a hotel room. Finally, the Journalist returns to West Berlin, where he has a long discussion with a Belarusian Professor, intertwined with fragments of the survivor story as told by the Professor. What follows is that in each one of those sequences

²⁴Włodzimierz Odojewski’s archive, AMU Poznań, “Spuścizna literacka Włodzimierza Odojewskiego. Opowiadania z tomu *Zabezpieczanie śladów*” [literary works by WO. Short stories from *Zabezpieczanie śladów*], files 1-12. Henceforth I will refer to these materials in the following way: AWO, *Zabezpieczanie*, file and page number.

²⁵I owe many of my observations regarding the text-forming process of the first paragraph of *Ku Dunzynańskiemu Wzgórzowi idzie las* to my work with a small team of students of Polish philology, specializing in editing literary texts – especially Krzysztof Zydor and Magdalena Wojtaś, as well as Jakub Eichler. We also had a conference presentation together, “Pamięć, zapomnienie, trauma w twórczości Włodzimierza Odojewskiego” [memory, oblivion, trauma in the works of WO] (April 2018) organized by the Archive of WO at the Faculty of Polish and Classical Studies AMU Poznań. Our presentation was entitled “*dużo przerażenia, pamięć zbrodni i wyobraźnia*”. *Dossier genezy, proces tekstotwórczy oraz próba krytyki genetycznej opowiadania „Ku Dunzynańskiemu Wzgórzowi idzie las”* [lots of fear, memory of a crime and imagination. Genesis dossier, text-forming process and an attempt at genetic criticism of “*Ku Dunzynańskiemu Wzgórzowi idzie las*”], and has not been published to date.

the story takes place near Smoleńsk (among others, the alleged Katyń) and in the Polesie (Belarusian) wilderness.

It should be added here that the most extensive documentation collected in file 3 concerns the first 14 paragraphs which constitute “Berlin 1” sequence, especially the first four units, whose more and less extensive versions cover 20 pages. Reading the manuscripts and typescripts (typically accompanied by a dense network of hand- and type-written notes, as well as deletions) containing the first paragraphs of the story about Katyń (another one by Odojewski) makes one realize the amount of work, bordering on obsession, spent on the opening.

Out of the 20 records which comprise the avant-text of the opening sentences and the whole initial paragraph of *Ku Dunzynańskiemu Wzgórzcu*, as many as 17 can be found in file 3, out of which some are manuscripts, and the remaining 11 – working typescripts (with numerous traces of hand-written additions).

I would also like to remind the reader that in the 1984 Paris edition the beginning of the story also consisted of its own title – the motto from *Macbeth*, and a short (for Odojewski) paragraph (21-verse-long), from which the reader can learn about the several-hours-long meeting between the Journalist and the Professor (which took place late in the afternoon or in the evening) in a scorching hot apartment, the complicated process taking place (or rather not being able to take place) in the consciousness of the Journalist, amid growing fatigue and anxiety. Such a rudimentary reconstruction is necessary in order to facilitate reconstructing the writing process at the very beginning of that difficult story. “It was already around half past five in the afternoon, and the sun was burning and scorching the concrete walls of the apartment, just like then, when between twelve and one the Journalist met the Professor for the first time to talk about that tape”²⁶.

I divide the 17 attempts at the first sentence and the first paragraph into two groups. The first one has three pages – one handwritten (k. 27v) and two typewritten (k. 30 and k. 157). Page 27v is the oldest surviving attempt at recording the opening of the story, whereas the typewritten pages are its rewritten and (quite heavily) edited versions. Thus, the author made a hand-written sketch of the starting point, and then typed it (k. 30), later adding hand-written corrections and typing it again (k. 157) with the corrections, but also adding subsequent corrections (typescript k. 30 was crossed out with crossing lines, which may mean it was rewritten and outdated).

Below you can see the scan of page 27v²⁷ with its transliteration²⁸, in order to provide an insight into the way Odojewski was working on the early versions of his short story.

²⁶W. Odojewski, *Ku Dunzynańskiemu Wzgórzcu idzie las*, in *Zabezpieczanie śladów*, p. 73.

²⁷AWO, *Zabezpieczanie*, file 3, k. 27v.

²⁸The transliteration was assisted by the already mentioned Magdalena Wojtaś. We used diplomatic transliteration: “clear and «identical» recreation of a document, copying the layout of the text as close to the original as possible, with its empty spaces, references, margins, spacing, etc., copying also the position of words in reference to other words”. P.-M. de Biasi, p. 104.

Moją przyjaciółką z Berlina (nazwijmy ją Korespondentką) relacjonowała mi
 rozmowę z pewnym osobnikiem z Dolnej Wisły (nazwijmy ją Korespondentką) -
 myślałem o Osobniku) tego korespondenta (nazwijmy go Korespondentem) polskie
 osoby i powieści, że nie mówię tu
 przeszedł i opowiadał mi o tym, że nie ma (tego osobnika) w swoim domu, że
 rozmowa z nim nie była demonstracją, że nie ma (tego osobnika) w swoim domu, że
 polskie osoby i powieści, że nie mówię tu

1. Moją przyjaciółką z Berlina dał to, co swego czasu
2. napisał o meczach a koty i słońce roku perennu osob-
3. niowi z kłopotliwym. To przedstawia ten osobnik
4. miał umowę, że nie ma (tego osobnika) w swoim domu, że
5. ~~nie ma (tego osobnika) w swoim domu, że~~
6. ~~nie ma (tego osobnika) w swoim domu, że~~
7. ~~nie ma (tego osobnika) w swoim domu, że~~
8. ~~nie ma (tego osobnika) w swoim domu, że~~
9. ~~nie ma (tego osobnika) w swoim domu, że~~
10. ~~nie ma (tego osobnika) w swoim domu, że~~
11. ~~nie ma (tego osobnika) w swoim domu, że~~
12. ~~nie ma (tego osobnika) w swoim domu, że~~
13. ~~nie ma (tego osobnika) w swoim domu, że~~
14. ~~nie ma (tego osobnika) w swoim domu, że~~
15. ~~nie ma (tego osobnika) w swoim domu, że~~
16. ~~nie ma (tego osobnika) w swoim domu, że~~
17. ~~nie ma (tego osobnika) w swoim domu, że~~
18. ~~nie ma (tego osobnika) w swoim domu, że~~
19. ~~nie ma (tego osobnika) w swoim domu, że~~
20. ~~nie ma (tego osobnika) w swoim domu, że~~
21. ~~nie ma (tego osobnika) w swoim domu, że~~
22. ~~nie ma (tego osobnika) w swoim domu, że~~
23. ~~nie ma (tego osobnika) w swoim domu, że~~
24. ~~nie ma (tego osobnika) w swoim domu, że~~
25. ~~nie ma (tego osobnika) w swoim domu, że~~
26. ~~nie ma (tego osobnika) w swoim domu, że~~
27. ~~nie ma (tego osobnika) w swoim domu, że~~
28. ~~nie ma (tego osobnika) w swoim domu, że~~

Fig. 1. Page 27 v containing the first (known) edition of the opening of Ku Dunzynańskiemu Wzgórzu idzie las.

Mój przyjaciel z Berlina Zachodniego (nazwijmy go Korespondentem) relacjonował mi rozmowę z pewnym osobnikiem z Polskiej Misji Wojskowej w tym mieście (nazwijmy go Osobnikiem)* Tego popołudnia Osobnik zadzwonił podniecony i powiedział, że chce mówić K u przyszedł i upewnił się z nieufnością czy nikogo nie ma (tego rodzaju nieufność można by jeszcze zrozumieć, bo O. był komunistycznym dyplomata a K dziennikarzem jednego z pism szwajcarskich i specjalistą od spraw wschodnich, ale przecież już wcześniej przez telefon powiedział mi że będą sami, że żona

Mój przyjaciel z Berlina dał to, co swego czasu napisałem o masakrze w katyńskim lasu pewnemu osobnikowi z misji wojskowej. Po przeczytaniu ten osobnik miał mu powiedzieć, że oczywiście się zgodzą. wszyscy i tak dobrze wiedzą to wszystko i tak próżne pieprzenie, bo Sowietci nigdy nie zgodzą się już na ogłoszenie prawdy. Była jedna okazja za Gomułki, ale gomułka okazję przesrał ze strachu. A jak[‡] sami Sowietci nie ogłoszą, to świat i tak tego nie usłyszy, wiadomo, tak relacjonował mi mój przyjaciel z Berlina. ¶ Potem ten osobnik miał się namyślić i miał powiedzieć, że kiedy był w partyzantce to sam też o tym słyszał. Siedzieli w pokoju bibliotecznym mego przyjaciela a ten osobnik najpierw się upewnił, czy w mieszkaniu nie ma prócz nich nikogo i niezego, choć przecież już przedtem, zanim przyszedł, o to przez telefon tego wieczora pytał, i przyszedł tylko pod tym warunkiem, że będą sami a mój przyjaciel zapewnił go nawet, że jego żony nie będzie, bo wybiera się na koncert a po koncercie ze przyjaciółkami mogą być na kolację i będą sami do późna ale jeszcze raz się upewnił i powiedział, że już wtedy w partyzantce o tym słyszał, o było

* Pierwsza litera w słowie „popołudnia” poprawiona- pierwotnie było: „dopołudnia.

‡ Wstawka przed słowem „jak” trudna do odczytania.

What makes me treat those three pages separately and consider them to be the first sequences of the avant-text of the story's opening? Firstly, Odojewski used first-person narration and used the narrator's friends, the West-Berlin Correspondent and the Character (a representative of the Polish Military Militia) as protagonists only in those three versions. The reproduction (and transliteration) of page 27v shows that the first version in fact consists of two editions – the first one is more extensive, crossed out in many sections. I believe it is the first because of Odojewski's habit to use a template of a sort, i.e. A4 pages with numbered lines while working on rough copies (as well as final versions) in the form of manuscripts and typescripts. On page k. 27v the author, using a black pen, started to sketch the opening of the short story from the first line of the page, continuing to the end of the page, and subsequent pages. At some point he crossed out large sections of that version, drawing a horizontal black line above them, above which he wrote in a more neat (less hurried) handwriting a new version of the opening, this time using a blue pen. Later that version was crossed out with two crossing lines as well (black pen) – in my opinion this is how he marked the fact that the "blue" version was typed (k. 30).

Thus the autograph (k. 27v) *de facto* brings two conceptualizations of the story's beginning, where Odojewski wanted to introduce the motif of Katyń and the circumstances of the secret recording of the Polish People's Republic clerk as quickly as possible. Subsequent editions (typescript – page 30 and 157) show developing the presentation of protagonists (especially the Correspondent) and the writing-research work of the narrator regarding the Katyń war crime. Hence it can be assumed that the three discussed reconstructed editions (or actually four, if we agree with the classification of the hand-written notes on k. 27v as two separate attempts at opening the story) are a note of a sort, a sketch of an idea for a story, perhaps even an outline of *Ku Dunzynańskiemu Wzgórzu...* It should be stressed that originally the author wanted to use first-person narration, and that the issue of remembering about the Katyń crime and questioning, erasing it from history was at the forefront. Hence it can be assumed that both in the already discussed and subsequent editions of the story's first paragraph there are story arcs and motifs which were redistributed in other paragraphs (mostly in sequences Berlin 1, as well as Berlin 2) in the printed version of the short story.

The remaining 14 pages (file 3)²⁹, containing the opening section of the story can be classified as the second group, whose major characteristics include fundamental narrative-personal decisions of Odojewski – who henceforth uses personal narration (the Journalist's perspective), and introduces the Professor into the story. Several subsequent texts which I classify as the avant-text of the opening – five autographs and nine typescripts – also permit tracking of the mode and methods of Odojewski's work on the story text. For brevity's sake I would like to focus on the most important feature of that text-forming process.

²⁹AWO, *Zabezpieczenie*, file 3: 1r(a), 4(a), 6(a), 7v(a), 11r(a), 13(m), 19(m), 20(m), 22(m), 24(m), 25(m), 31(m), 61(m) and 120(m). The letter "a" in brackets means autographs (manuscripts), and "m" – typescripts. Using that collection, I arranged the avant-text of the opening of the story: k. 4 → k. 6 → k. 7v → k. 11r → k. 25 → k. 24 → k. 20 → k. 19 → k. 22 → k. 13 → k. 31 → k. 61 → k. 1r → k. 120. Some arguments in favor of that sequence will be discussed further in the text, and the rest should be explained in a genetic edition of *Ku Dunzynańskiemu Wzgórzu idzie las*, which Archiwum Włodzimierza Odojewskiego is planning to publish.

Having made the decision about the form of narration, Odojewski focused on constructing the temporal-spatial aspects of the meeting between the Journalist and the Professor, which revealed the sensational fact: the recording of a Katyń apocryphal of a sort (the story of the Character from the Polish Military Mission). Deciding how much information the first paragraph should contain is another, equally important problem that Odojewski faced. I select six out of the 14 subsequent attempts at the opening, which illustrate the essential turns and breakthroughs in editing the time, place and subject of the first paragraph. I typically quote the first sentence of subsequent versions (using a simplified transliteration), sometimes adding the second one, sometimes shortening the initial sentence, for my intention is only to signal the direction of transformations and to accentuate the destination of that long, thoughtful process. Each version is provided with its page number³⁰:

[k. 4] *The Journalist ~~was at~~ visited the Professor a week ago. Although it was raining, it was hot and stuffy, and they were sitting in that mercilessly cluttered... in the gloomy charm of that weary afternoon.*

[k. 6] *They had been talking about it for two hours or so, strolling near the alleys of Tiergarten. Even the shadow casted by trees was hot and stuffy there³¹*

[k. 25] *It was around 4 p.m., and the sun was burning and scorching the concrete walls, just like then, between twelve and one, when both of them, having sighted/sighting³²heavily at the same time, ~~but with relief~~, they fell down facing each other, limp and run down because of the heat on the doctor's sofas, worn down yet still comfortable, squeaking with their springs.*

[k. 13] *It was around half past five in the afternoon, and the sun was burning and scorching the concrete walls of the apartment, just like then, when between twelve and one the Professor and the Journalist met for the first time to talk about that issue in the mercilessly cluttered room³³*

[k. 1r] *The Journalist and the Professor first met regarding that Katyń audio tape in that mercilessly cluttered room and maybe that is why nothing in, despite those six almost hours had passed, he still had not got it/that³⁴, it had not reached his consciousness/brain [...] no sense of triumph had appeared in his mind*

[k. 120] *It was already around half past five in the afternoon, and despite that the sun was still burning and scorching the concrete walls of the apartment, just like then, when between twelve and one the Journalist met the Professor for the first time to talk about that audio tape. Perhaps then it was why, despite the fact that over five hours had passed, that seemingly obvious, self-imposing thought still had not reached him, had not reached his brain [...], still no sense of triumph had appeared in his mind³⁵*

³⁰AWO, *Zabezpieczenie*, file 3.

³¹At the top of that page the author added a significant deposition: "the story has to go back to Tiergarten, where a retrospection to the evening when the diplomat visited the Professor and told his story, should go", AWO, *Zabezpieczenie*, file 3, k. 6.

³²A handwritten note with the polish *chajac* [-ing] was placed above the verb – a change in the form executed in the subsequent typescript of the page in question (in file 3 it is page number 24).

³³This is where the title of the story appears for the first time – for now in the form "Las Biernam idzie" [Biernam forest is walking], without the *Macbeth* motto.

³⁴[another change of a Polish verbal form]

³⁵This version is entitled slightly differently "Idzie birhamski las" [Birham forest is going].

Towards what and using what devices is the author striving in those several versions of the opening? He must have been working on it for at least a few days, judging by the number of editions, especially those typed and corrected with hand notes, sometimes using a white corrector, and typed again. It shows much consideration of the aura in which another attempt at discussing the Katyń war crime in his work should be told. Already in the initial phase, the one written in first-person narration, the problem of remembering Katyń and lies surrounding it is clearly stated. Now the stakes were to highlight the contours of the protagonists of the drama. In the second phase (still first-person narration), Odojewski moves the action to a new place. First it is the West-Berlin Tiergarten, and later (until the end) – the action takes place indoors, in a concrete apartment block (it is mentioned on one of the pages). Odojewski originally focuses on describing what the apartment shared by the Professor and his (in some editions dead, in some, living) wife, a professional psychoanalyst, looked like. In every version he highlighted the weather conditions – it is always incredibly hot in the big city. Finally, he specifies the temporal frames – the length of the meeting between the Journalist and the Professor is further and further specified with each edition. Eventually, on page 1r he makes a hand-written note, possibly even with one pen stroke, of what he had been seeking. He moves information regarding the scenography, as well as about the meeting and the conversation that the Professor had with the communist diplomat, to further (yet still initial) paragraphs. He leaves the sentence about the several-hours-long conversation between the Journalist and the Professor, followed by an extended, highly complex sentence with a labyrinth structure that he mastered in his major works from the Podolski cycle. This is where he formulates what he meant. The printed version goes as follows:

So maybe that was why (although it had been over five hours) the thought – seemingly obvious, self-imposing – that something he had been searching for, wasting on it half of his life, fell into his hands, still had not reached him, had not reached his brain; still no sense of triumph, satisfaction, even compensation for the effort from fate, or even a sense of surprise that his searched had been met by a coincidence, and definitely no premonition that such a coincidence may affect his future efforts regarding that matter and that it would engage him for a long time, pushing aside and diminishing everything else he had been doing and what had constituted his life, had appeared in his mind³⁶.

“Thought”, “feeling”, “surprise”, “premonition”, as well as “brain”, “consciousness” – all those words redirect the reader’s attention from external circumstances to what is going on with the Journalist. Or rather, what could not happen with him, because Odojewski decided to – in a way – suspend his protagonist’s consciousness. I believe that this is what Odojewski was striving for when working on his opening paragraph: to capture, in all its painfulness and... elusiveness. the state of internal paralysis of the protagonist, who spent all his professional (and not only) life on searching for and promoting the truth about Katyń, as well as what was going on in the regions of the Second Polish Republic under Soviet influence and related totalitarian practices. Odojewski wants his short story to open in the atmosphere of unbearable heat, and he wants the reader to look at what is going on from the perspective of someone who is dealing with inertia. Someone might say that I am only articulating the sense which the author wrote in the final phase of his work on the opening paragraph. However, I am convinced that outlining the creative

³⁶W. Odojewski, *Ku Dunzynańskiemu Wzgórzu...*, p. 73.

road, and a genetic analysis of the reconstructed avant-text of the initial part of the story, make us realize its importance and the significance of that initial suspension of the Journalist's consciousness. He will have to deal with that problem throughout the story. The protagonist fights for the truth about the war crime to the same extent he fights for his subjectivity, taking his life into his own hands to confront his own limitations, resentments, grudges...

3.2. *Co słyszeć w ojczyźnie* – Postponing a meeting

The file containing rough copies of *Co słyszeć w ojczyźnie* has 188 pages, 60 percent of which are one-sided typescripts, and the rest are manuscripts, out of which two are written on both sides³⁷. The *dossier* of the short story belongs to the six-part collection documenting the text-forming process of the cycle *Zapomniane, nieuśmierzone*, which was first published by the West Berlin emigration monthly *Archipelag*³⁸.

The story in *Co słyszeć w ojczyźnie*, written in the years 1983-1984³⁹, is strongly connected to the introduction of martial law in Poland (the story takes place in 1982). It focuses on a meeting between the protagonist and the narrator, a Polish emigrant who does not hide his intellectual and writing competences, with an old friend who has arrived from Poland and is connected with the government there. They spend an evening and a night together, walking and stopping by a few places in an old, hot Italian seaside town. They both drink a lot, and try to put up appearances in an unsophisticated way. They both hide one crucial fact: the narrator knows that Beata, wife of his Polish friend, a woman he loved, has been dead for six months, whereas his friend pretends she is still alive. They both know that the other person is hiding something. Any facts, conversations, interpersonal relations shown in that short story are full of uncertainty, even phantasmagoria. The deeper the reader goes into the story, the more he or she has to deal with these half-sleepy, half-drunk, streams of consciousness and fantasies of the narrator, full of memories and visions.

In this study about Odojewski's struggles with opening his texts it will be very important to me to capture the way he set in motion the literary mechanism which creates a sense of unreality, growing from one paragraph to another, affecting the two troubled protagonists.

The avant-text of the opening paragraph consists of 15 pages, out of which two are autographs, and the rest are typed⁴⁰. I disregard two pages with notes about the correction of the

³⁷AWO, "Spuścizna literacka...", files 1-6. Apart from file 3, materials related to *Co słyszeć w ojczyźnie* can also be found in files 5 and 6, but those are copies of final drafts and computer printouts with corrections. Henceforth I will refer to these materials in the following way: AWO, *Zapomniane*, file and page number.

³⁸The short story was first published in the London *Puls* (1983, No 17), where the title had a question mark at the end. Two years later the story was reprinted in a special issue *Puls. Przegląd numerów 14-17* [a review of No 14-17] (1982-1983), Cracow 1985.

³⁹Starting from the third book edition of the short story (within the cycle *Zapomniane, nieuśmierzone*) and at the same time the first one after 1989 (Warsaw 1991), the author added the year when the story was written: 1984. In the following edition (within a longer cycle, *Bez tchu* [breathless], Warsaw 2002) the date was preceded by the place: Otranto. However, given the publication from *Pulse*, the date is incorrect. The first printing is not much different from later book editions. The major difference is that in the *Pulse* version the opening paragraph encompasses the two initial paragraphs from book editions. This could mean that in 1984 Odojewski was still working on the final version of the text.

⁴⁰For accuracy's sake it should be added that AWO, *Zapomniane*, file 3 contains two more cards with the initial paragraph, but those are copies of the pages I have already considered – k. 1 (copy of k. 17) and k. 52 (copy of k. 33).

beginning of the story, which are beyond the scope of this paper, which leaves us with 12 pages from file 3 and one from file 6. The analysis of those notes allows the division of the material documenting the work on the beginning of *Co słycać w ojczyźnie* into two halves, to which I give separate working names based on different incipits reflecting two fundamental phases in the work on the text.

a) „Spotkałem go na corso...” [I met him at corso] – the first phase can be found on pages which I arranged as follows: k. 187v → k. 185 → k. 180 → k. 17 → k. 33 → k. 135; the first one is an autograph (in a red pen, hardly ever used by Odojewski), and the remaining pages, which contain subsequent editions of the story’s opening, are typed. Each subsequent edition develops the opening text. Odojewski’s efforts concern enriching and chiseling the description of the topography of the streets of the Italian city where the story takes place. In this stage of work, the first paragraph consists of two very long, complex and complicated sentences. Below I compare (using simplified transliteration) the original and penultimate edition of the opening paragraph⁴¹:

[k. 187v] I met him at corso, here ~~in that old town~~ Otranto beginning in a ~~small~~ dead end at the foot of the city walls ~~of the castle~~ remains integrated into the rocks washed by the sea ~~waves~~, where there was a small square and several cafés spilling onto the sidewalk with their tables, umbrellas and chairs, or rather a little further on the square in front of the city gates, and continuing along the coast of the bay/ somehow containing some river, now almost completely dry/⁴² between acacia trees/ with leaves/⁴³ mossy with dust and everyday heat, and it was already evening and not a bit of cold, although the indestructible wind/ picked up/⁴⁴ blowing from the sea as soon as it became dark.

[k. 33] I met him at Corso beginning here at the foot of city walls integrated into the rocks, in a dead end, where there is a small square, several cafés whose numerous tables under colorful umbrellas take up almost the whole sidewalk, *and* behind the broad window shop a room of automatic games is shining with fluorescent lights, and a bit further, where the small square turns into a big one in front of the medieval gate, and which leads to the newer part of the town in the lane of acacia trees along the bay coast, towards which the river Oremo is carving its way from the nearby mountains, now limited to a shallow spring, and from there you can to a square, through a bridge crossing the river, and again towards the bay, again between the thick acacia trees with leaves mossy and matted and grey with dust, the sun, and the heat, even though a delicate, moist wind picked up from the sea as soon as it became dark.

I quote here two editions of the initial sentence written in the first phase of Odojewski’s work on the story to show the growing descriptive inertia. The author must have known that his description runs aground and dangerously loses impetus gained thanks to first-person narration (rare in Odojewski, and whenever he used it, it was to accentuate the rich inner narration of his protagonist-narrator) at

⁴¹The passages are preceded by page numbers. Both are from AWO, *Zapomniane*, file 3. Similarly to the beginning of *Ku Dunzynańskiemu Wzgórzcu...* I note the handwritten passages in italics, and use regular font for typed text.

⁴²I use the slash to mark phrases written above the verse starting with “bay”, which is an intrusion into the part of the sentence about the bay and acacia trees.

⁴³The phrase “with leaves” was added between “trees” and “mossy”, but Odojewski left the word “mossy” declined in agreement with the plural acacia trees.

⁴⁴The phrase “picked up” was added between the noun “wind” and the Polish preposition “od” [from]. However, Odojewski did not erase the superfluous verb “blowing”.

the very beginning. At the same time the changes taking place in the opening text between the first (k. 187v) and fifth (k. 33) version are evident. The toponym "Otranto" disappears, and the name of the river, which in fact has nothing to do with the south-Italian Adriatic port, appears. In the fifth attempt at editing the beginning there are more details revealing what Corso looked like, which do not add anything to the narrator's characteristics, although admittedly they allow the postponement of the confrontation between the narrator and his compatriot.

Hence Odojewski is looking for another way to open his story. He notes (in a black pen) on k. 142: "I know that I don't need to look for him, nor make an appointment with him on the phone, that in the evening it is enough to go out at Corso in order to meet him just like then..."⁴⁵. He continues that sentence almost until the middle of the next page, ends it abruptly, and then places several unfinished phrases, where a ringing phone and a doorman's voice appear, and finally he turns to a completely new opening:

b) „Właśnie chciałem wyjść..." [I was just about to leave], is the second – i.e. striving towards the definite version of the opening paragraph – phase of the text-forming process of *Co słychać w ojczyźnie*. Here I also have six pages (similarly to the first phase, one is a manuscript, and the rest are typed), which I arrange as follows: k. 142 → k. 141 → k. 93 → k. 131 → k. 124 → k. 70. However, the avant-text of the first component of the story in the latest version (k. 70) is still very extended and encompasses text which will be divided into two separate paragraphs in the book version⁴⁶. Here is the original edition of the new version of the opening:

I was just about to leave ~~but he called~~ and then the phone rang; I heard a voice in the earphone, as if ~~from a hundred kilometers away~~ melted in a vast distance and ~~I had to twice~~ maybe three times impatiently repeat my question before I understood that it was the doorman from a hotel only several hundred meters away, and that he was informing me that he had already arrived, and ~~maybe~~ had gone to bed to rest after the journey; and after all none else would call me and I knew very well that he would come⁴⁷.

In the next five attempts – classified here as the second phase of work on the story – there are no drastic changes in the edition of the opening paragraph, only some extensions and corrections to the complex sentences quoted above. This means that the author found the right concept for opening the story, full of understatements between the two protagonists, and moreover each of them deals with the unbearable pain of loneliness, lack of fulfillment, even a sense of failure in life. Moreover those individual failures and the suicide of a loved woman are reinforced by the catastrophic social and political situation in Poland. It can be thus seen that the author needed another version of the opening of a text discussing such difficult problems other than one full of topographic details. After all, that work on the text (six versions under the same label, "Spotkałem go na corso...") was not in vain, since the descriptive-informative sentences from the third, fourth and fifth (phase two) paragraphs were later moved to further parts of the story, as evidenced by rough copies.

⁴⁵AWO, *Zapomniane*, file 3.

⁴⁶Before Odojewski introduces this change, the story with a longer opening paragraph will appear in the already mentioned *Pulse*. While he was working on the 1987 Berlin edition he decided to divide it into two separate paragraphs, which is documented by AWO, *Zapomniane*, file 6, k. 1.

⁴⁷AWO, *Zapomniane*, file 3, k. 142.

Hence here the mechanism of the text-forming process works in a similar way as the avant-text of *Ku Dunzynańskiemu Wzgórzu...* The goal of changes in the already written text and moving certain elements (words, phrases, or even entire sentences carrying information about the time, place, and protagonists of the story) is after all different. The first paragraph of the previous story was to place the starting (weight) point in the external world of the lost Journalist, who will have to try to break the existential and spiritual impasse, turn the state of suspended consciousness. In *Co słytać w ojczyźnie*, the author wants to highlight the scale of the dilemmas and ambivalences with which the first-person narrator is struggling. For this reason he postpones the moment of the meeting between the emigrant (narrator) with the newcomer, the news about the motherland, battered with martial law, and to the same extent, the death of a woman dear to both protagonists. In the course of writing it turned out that the effect of postponement and belatedness can be achieved more suggestively and effectively by moving it in time (the phone conversation informing about the arrival of the old friend took place before meeting him in the streets of the Italian town) and limiting space (the narrator's hotel room), and above all throwing some light on the course of thoughts and feelings of the first-person narrator. Knowing about such a shift in compositional accents, we can now put forward a thesis that the south-Italian scenery is of secondary importance to the story, and so we can focus on what concerns the emigrant, who is dealing with broadly understood loss. In that sense the postponement of the meeting with a guest from Poland signaled in the opening paragraph means postponing the irrevocable loss not only of a loved one, but also of motherland⁴⁸. If we look at it that way, it may turn out that the text-forming process of that story shows the primacy of melancholy related to emigration, the experience of being exiled.

3.3. *Sezon w Wenecji* – Reducing the distance

The fundamental core of the *dossier* of the genesis of *Sezon w Wenecji* consists of two files stored in the Poznań archive⁴⁹, which in total contain 233 pages (115 in file 1 and 118 in file 2), documenting his work on the text of the short story. Fifty-four are manuscripts, and 179, typescripts. However, one should bear in mind that a bit over 30 of those pages are only several-verse long sequences which resulted from cutting larger, typed pages. This means that the actual core of the archived documentation is 200 A4 pages, ¼ of which comprise handwritten rough copies, and the rest are typed.

Actually, in this case it is better to talk about a few (at least four) Venetian motifs and consider them against a roughly sketched map of events of the whole story. Such an outline seems necessary in the case of quite an extensive short story (for Odojewski, as well as more generally for short prose forms from the final decades of the 20th century). The text is 65 pages long, it was not divided into shorter units, and paragraphs are basic compositional units. Ninety-one paragraphs of *Sezon w Wenecji* can be arranged into 10 storylines, four out of which are dominated by Venice. Those are key elements – two make a text-framing device, and the other two provide significant turns in the story and its

⁴⁸Małgorzata Hueckel characterized one of the dominants of the whole *Zapomniane, nieuśmierzone...*: “In every story the wave of memories is sudden, unwanted, caused by some internal, coincidental reason: a letter from Poland, a meeting from someone arriving from there”. “The short stories show a dramatic contrast between intensity and clarity of a memory, and the unavailability of its subject”. M. Hueckel, Małgorzata, *O cierpieniu przemijania* [on the suffering of evanescence], in: *Odojewski i krytycy...*p. 167.

⁴⁹AWO, “Spuścizna literacka Włodzimierza Odojewskiego. *Jedźmy, wracajmy*”, file 1-2. Henceforth I will refer to these materials in the following way: AWO, *Jedźmy*, file and page number.

emotional-intellectual layer. The paragraphs opening *Sezon w Wenecji* could get the working title “Venice promised and cancelled”, whereas the closing segments – “Saving childhood Venice; an adult resigning from visiting the real Venice”. The storylines mentioned here are thus the pivotal point of the story whose center lies in two Venetian chains, which I propose to entitle: “A source in Aunt Weronika’s basement” and “Venetian carnival in the underground of a villa”. It should be highlighted that those two motifs are separated by the darkest (several paragraphs long) part of the story, where Marek experiences his war initiation (he is left alone with a dead body of a German soldier).

Next, I would like to analyze the text-forming evolution of the first out of four major Venetian storylines, divided into six paragraphs in the printed version. Similarly to previous sections, here I would also like to focus on analyzing the avant-text of the initial paragraph, which will allow me to show how Odojewski’s idea (which took him a very long time to develop, between 1976 and 1999), abandoned and returned to, gains depth and its message crystallizes due to decisions regarding the shape of the Venetian motif.

The avant-text of the first, Venetian part of the story (“Venice promised and cancelled”) consists of 41 pages (including six autographs). 14 pages documenting the author’s work on editing the very beginning of the story can be excluded from that collection.

Before I divide the avant-text of the opening paragraph of *Sezon w Wenecji* into two basic parts, I would like to stress the fact that the surviving rough copies of the story create an impression of being incomplete, which is reflected in the attempts at reconstructing Odojewski’s work on the whole story, especially its first part. The lack of materials from the final, pre-printing phase of text-editing seems to be the most painful – I do not have access to the final manuscript (or typescript). A clear gap is visible between the final surviving edition of the beginning of the story and its book version. Still, it is possible to distinguish two phases in the work on the opening sentences of the story, to which I give the following working titles: “From the perspective of 1968” (the first one), and “... when he learned that he would not come” (part of the first paragraph of the story) (the second one).

a) “From the perspective of 1968” – to which I include six pages from the first file of rough copies of *Sezon w Wenecji*, arranged as follows: k. 1 → k. 4 → k. 86 → k. 85 → k. 84 → k. 76 → k. 77 → k. 78⁵⁰. The first two pages are a special document of the first attempts at the text, characteristic for Odojewski⁵¹: handwritten notes documenting his initial ideas for the story which take the form of incomplete phrases or complete sentences. Today they can be found scattered across various paragraphs of the printed story. I selected two short quotations from each one of the two pages⁵²:

[k. 1] when he found out about the wonderful

[k. 4] Knowledge about that wonderful city emerges from the darkness of the very beginning of its life. For when he had

⁵⁰AWO, *Jedźmy*, file 1.

⁵¹Similar forms of notes of both initial and later lexical concepts or those regarding the shape of the story, physical characteristics of the protagonists, etc. can be found in the genesis *dossiers* of other short stories by Odojewski in his Poznań archive.

⁵²AWO, *Jedźmy*, file 1.

~~Wielki Apokaliptyczny i cokolwiek
 co ma z niego pochodzący i wszystkie te
 jak o powołaniu i dniu
 i których nie są
 wie drzye?~~

~~Wielki Apokaliptyczny i cokolwiek
 co ma z niego pochodzący i wszystkie te
 jak o powołaniu i dniu
 i których nie są
 wie drzye?~~

~~Wielki Apokaliptyczny i cokolwiek
 co ma z niego pochodzący i wszystkie te
 jak o powołaniu i dniu
 i których nie są
 wie drzye?~~

Fig. 3. Bottom part of page 1 containing probably the first edition (first verse from the top, just below the horizontal line) of the beginning of *Sezon w Wenecji*.

~~Wielki Apokaliptyczny i cokolwiek
 co ma z niego pochodzący i wszystkie te
 jak o powołaniu i dniu
 i których nie są
 wie drzye?~~

1. ~~Wielki Apokaliptyczny i cokolwiek
 co ma z niego pochodzący i wszystkie te
 jak o powołaniu i dniu
 i których nie są
 wie drzye?~~

2. ~~Wielki Apokaliptyczny i cokolwiek
 co ma z niego pochodzący i wszystkie te
 jak o powołaniu i dniu
 i których nie są
 wie drzye?~~

3. ~~Wielki Apokaliptyczny i cokolwiek
 co ma z niego pochodzący i wszystkie te
 jak o powołaniu i dniu
 i których nie są
 wie drzye?~~

4. ~~Wielki Apokaliptyczny i cokolwiek
 co ma z niego pochodzący i wszystkie te
 jak o powołaniu i dniu
 i których nie są
 wie drzye?~~

5. ~~Wielki Apokaliptyczny i cokolwiek
 co ma z niego pochodzący i wszystkie te
 jak o powołaniu i dniu
 i których nie są
 wie drzye?~~

6. ~~Wielki Apokaliptyczny i cokolwiek
 co ma z niego pochodzący i wszystkie te
 jak o powołaniu i dniu
 i których nie są
 wie drzye?~~

7. ~~Wielki Apokaliptyczny i cokolwiek
 co ma z niego pochodzący i wszystkie te
 jak o powołaniu i dniu
 i których nie są
 wie drzye?~~

8. ~~Wielki Apokaliptyczny i cokolwiek
 co ma z niego pochodzący i wszystkie te
 jak o powołaniu i dniu
 i których nie są
 wie drzye?~~

9. ~~Wielki Apokaliptyczny i cokolwiek
 co ma z niego pochodzący i wszystkie te
 jak o powołaniu i dniu
 i których nie są
 wie drzye?~~

10. ~~Wielki Apokaliptyczny i cokolwiek
 co ma z niego pochodzący i wszystkie te
 jak o powołaniu i dniu
 i których nie są
 wie drzye?~~

11. ~~Wielki Apokaliptyczny i cokolwiek
 co ma z niego pochodzący i wszystkie te
 jak o powołaniu i dniu
 i których nie są
 wie drzye?~~

12. ~~Wielki Apokaliptyczny i cokolwiek
 co ma z niego pochodzący i wszystkie te
 jak o powołaniu i dniu
 i których nie są
 wie drzye?~~

Fig. 4. Top part of page 4 containing one of the earliest editions (verse three and four from the top) of the beginning of *Sezon w Wenecji*.

I think that the fact that both phrases are crossed out proves that they were re-used later in the process of writing and editing the text. If we look at what they are about in the context of other notes on both pages, we will see the loneliness of the main, child protagonist – crucial for the work on the story and accentuated by the author – related to the motif of a wonderful city, Venice, and the effort of memory. Further in the first phase of writing⁵³ Odojewski decided that the childhood memory and the figure of Venice should be preceded by five paragraphs, where the first-person narration from the perspective of the main protagonist focuses on a re-visit to the city of P. upon San and in Aunt Weronika's old villa (i.e. places where the 10-year-old Marek will experience his Venice) soon after the events of March 1968. In the fifth paragraph Marek is standing in front of his aunt's house (now a school)

And then he accidentally looked at basement windows, which glimmered with something black in the gray light of a rainy day, he bent down, looked inside, and in that moment he remembered that ~~distant~~ summer, because the basement was filled with water, and the memory came with such a force to his throat that he heard his own breath, shortened, fast, rapid and tired. And so this is how it was?⁵⁴

We can assume with a high level of probability that such an opening carries clear traces of circumstances in which Odojewski started his work on that text, i.e. 1976 (as can be deduced from his own endorsement under the book version). It is known that at the time Odojewski was working on a novel, which he eventually abandoned, and which left behind three passages which he reworked as short stories and included in the second edition of *Jedźmy, wracajmy: Sezon w Wenecji, Nie można cię samego zostawić o zmierzchu* [You can't be left alone at twilight] and *Cyrk przyjechał, cyrk odjechał* [The circus has arrived, the circus has left]⁵⁵. Clearly the author – if it can be put that way – required an adult protagonist (through whom the story is filtered), a protagonist who is experiencing some sort of a crisis, lonely, or to put it simply, someone similar to an emigrant, i.e. someone whose condition strongly engaged Odojewski throughout 1970s and 1980s. Only after this three-page-long introduction the sixth paragraph appears, containing something similar to the incipit of the printed version of *Sezon w Wenecji*: “He paused to think: when was the first time he had heard of the wonderful city of Venice?”⁵⁶. It is followed by subsequent sentences in which the adult narrator is investigating the origins of his *quasi*-Venetian experience. And only those sentences, starting with the sixth paragraph of phase one, have survived in further work on the text which I classify as phase two, i.e.:

⁵³The remaining six pages from that phase of work on *Sezon w Wenecji* are typescripts, out of which those numbered 76-78 are a version of the very beginning of the story, which resulted from rewriting (and further modifying) an earlier version, documented on pages 84-86.

⁵⁴AWO, *Jedźmy*, file 1, k. 78.

⁵⁵G. Czerwiński, *Po rozpadzie świata. O przestrzeni artystycznej w prozie Włodzimierza Odojewskiego* [after the world falls apart. On artistic spaces in WO's prose], Gdańsk 2011, p. 268. Czerwiński quotes an interview given by Odojewski to Krzysztof Masłoń, where he explains that decision: “*Bawiliśmy się w żołnierzy*”. [we were playing soldiers] *Z Włodzimierzem Odojewskim rozmawia Krzysztof Masłoń*, „Rzeczpospolita” 2006, nr 205.

⁵⁶AWO, *Jedźmy*, file 1, k. 78.

b) “...when he learned that he would not come”, whose avant-text consists of six typed pages which I arranged as follows: k. 55 (file 1) → k. 24 (file 1) → k. 84 (file 2) → k. 2r (file 2) → k. 1r (file 2) → k. 108 (file 2)⁵⁷. The first four contain subsequent attempts at writing the first paragraph, opened with the protagonist wondering when he had heard of Venice for the first time. In most of them the text is still entitled *Sezon wenecki* (as in phase one), and the basic tendency in editing was working out Marek’s age⁵⁸ and the description of architectural and topographic nuances of a city which he imagined as “floating on water”⁵⁹ because of his nanny’s tales. It would seem that the shape of the first paragraph was stabilizing, when suddenly Odojewski once again decided to introduce an almost page-and-a-half long passage at the very beginning, in which he extended the narrative filter in the form of experiences and thoughts of an adult Marek:

He is looking for the right words, but he cannot, so he says: No, I will not go, but only “no”, for she will not understand anything from his explanations, no, no, and that he does not want to, stubbornly again and again, and he becomes silent, turns around, and the woman walks away, he hears her steps, at first hesitant, but after a moment faster, later he cannot hear anything apart from the rain falling on trees, branches and leaves, and he breathes in the sticky, warm breeze of garden fumes reaching the foot of the terrace⁶⁰ [...]. No, he will not go, he thinks, he does not have, there is no point. Next he thinks *more* intensely, when he first heard of Venice. And that he would not be able to establish – when. Now, just like *maybe* even then⁶¹

The passage above comes from the final part of the avant-text of the first paragraph of *Sezon w Wenecji* and it is a final draft (with some minor corrections) of the penultimate part of that avant-text (file 2, k. 1r). It would seem that this return to the perspective of an older man, obviously struggling with a painful burden of the past and lack of understanding from a woman who, as can be suspected, is close to him, had its source in the emigration stigma, which is carried by both the author (assuming that the text was written in 1970s) and his protagonist. It could be that Odojewski returned to his work on *Sezon w Wenecji* (in 1999) having the beginning quoted above as his starting point. If that is the case, then he returned to his old work while having a completely different situation in his life. In the 1990s he often spent more time in Poland (he still had his Warsaw apartment then), and he was in Munich because he wanted to, not because of politics. Highlighting the sense of estrangement of the protagonist due to emigration was no longer important. Indeed, Odojewski kept the perspective of an adult in the final draft, but it is expressed only with one initial verb in the first paragraph: “He is looking for” and “now” (immediately juxtaposed

⁵⁷AWO, *Jedźmy*, files 1-2. Following page number, file number is provided (in brackets).

⁵⁸It is about the moment when Marek’s mother leaves for Venice, leaving him with a nanny. First he is only one year old (AWO, *Jedźmy*, file 1, k. 55, 24; file 2, k. 84), next – a year and a half (AWO, file 2, k. 2r), and eventually over two years old (AWO, *Jedźmy*, file 2, k. 1r). In the book edition Marek “had just turned one and a half” (W. Odojewski, *Sezon...*, p. 5). However, Marek’s age in 1939 remains the same – ten years old.

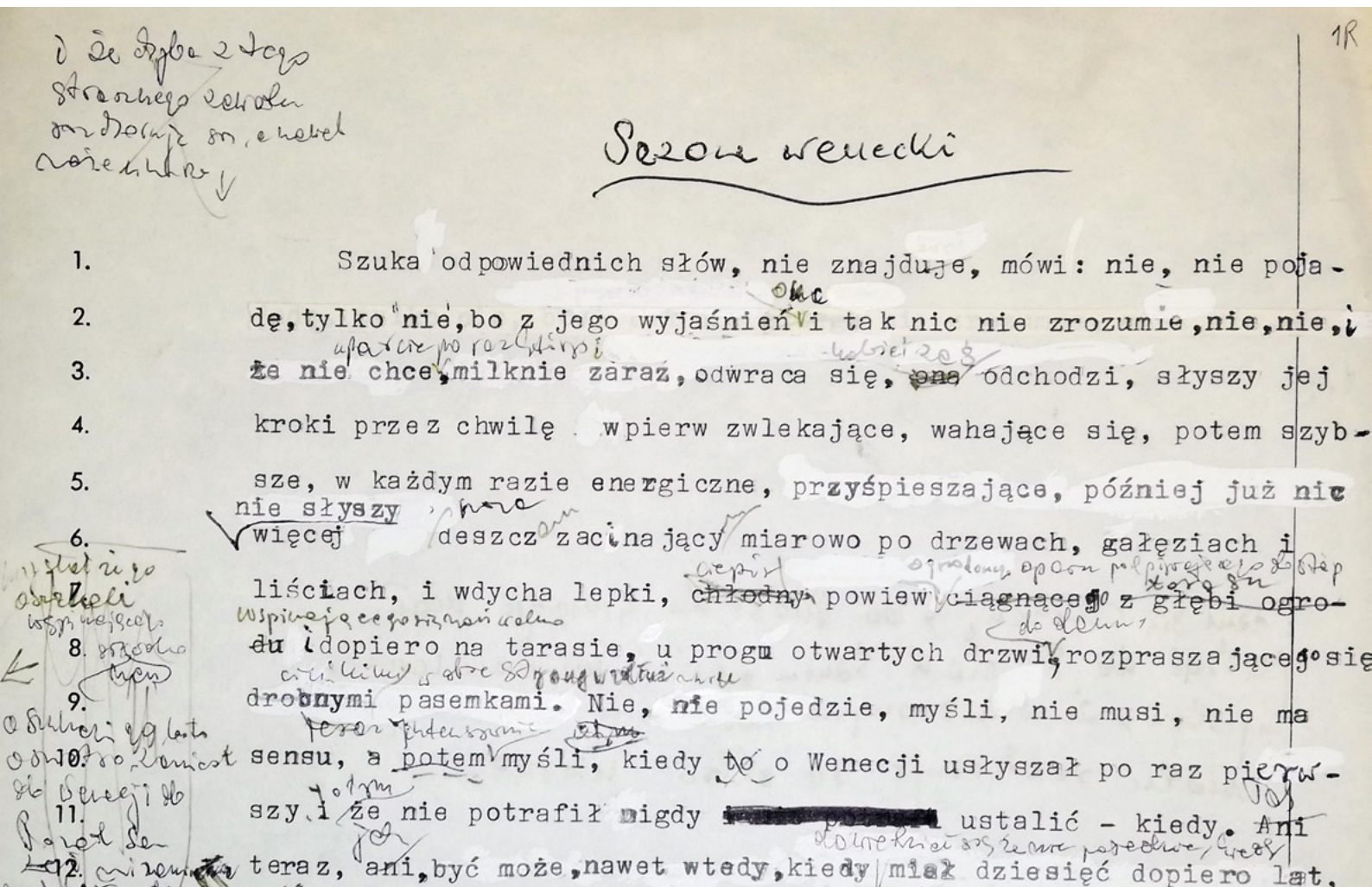
⁵⁹AWO, *Jedźmy*, file 1, k. 55, 24; file 2, k. 84, 2r, 1 r.

⁶⁰Typescript version.

⁶¹AWO, *Jedźmy*, file 2, k. 108. Here the final version of the title, *Sezon w Wenecji*, appears. I provide Odojewski’s minor corrections in italics.

with "then"⁶²), and then with subsequent paragraphs the reader's attention is entangled in a world of feelings, thoughts and physiology of a boy who is about to experience puberty and has to face the war. All that seems to indicate that there was a third phase of work on *Sezon w Wenecji*, whose only document is the final version of the text from its 2000 edition.

I would like to return to the penultimate part of the avant-text of that story. Below you can see a reproduction of its rough copy:



Ilustracja 5. Górna część k. 1r zawierająca przedostatnią redakcję początku opowiadania *Sezon w Wenecji*

⁶²W. Odojewski, *Sezon...*, p. 5. Obviously the grownup Marek appears in the final paragraph, however, to my mind, this does not contradict with the shape of the opening paragraph in both phases of work on the text which I analyze here.

I mean especially what is happening with the final verse of the top half of the page. Below you can see its simplified transliteration:

Neither/Both now, noras, perhaps, even then, when /he found out he would not go, when/ he was only ten⁶³

I would like to stress the fact that Odojewski decides to introduce one of the most crucial (both in terms for the story and the creation of the main protagonist) information to the initial paragraph – the boy had never been to Venice before – only towards the end of phase two. Thus the reader’s attention is focused on the fact of a child’s painful experience, it is fully concentrated on that fundamental moment in his life. Thanks to that the reader is entangled in the clash of two worlds: childhood and adulthood, whereas the narrative perspective places him or her in the former. If the majority of adults do not understand anything (according to Marek), the story could not begin with stressing the bitterness and pain of an adult man thinking about the past. Magdalena Rembowska-Płuciennik insightfully comments on that:

Hence for Marek Venice is the space constructed from someone else’s memory, implemented as a fantasy [...]. It is a space detached from his individual memory, hence deprived of pain and as such open to creation rather than repeating the experience... Not having memories – in Odojewski this is a blessing and a guarantee of internal freedom⁶⁴.

The analysis of the avant-text of the initial paragraph of *Sezon w Wenecji* allows the capture of the long process which led Odojewski himself to start his revolt on narrative art in his world. The author manages to escape the paralyzing memory, or maybe even more, to escape the pressure of trauma. Both Czerwiński and Anna Skibska stress that in this one short story he manages to “maintain the picture of the world before the cataclysm”⁶⁵. It was possible thanks to granting autonomy to a childlike experience of the world – Odojewski’s goal while writing subsequent editions of the story, especially its opening sentences. In the course of subsequent editions Odojewski shortens both the opening text and the distance between the reader (engaged in the narration led from the perspective of a ten-year-old) from childhood. He levels that distance so that he can turn both himself (a writer) and the reader into if not children, then at least into one of the adult protagonists, Aunt Barbara, who one day (while it is still the beginning of the war, fully engaging the attention of the other adults) says: “Did you know, children...? I forgot to tell you... Tomorrow we’re going to Venice”⁶⁶.

⁶³AWO, *Jedźmy*, file 2, k. 1r.

⁶⁴M. Rembowska-Płuciennik, *Miasto zapomnienia. Wenecja Włodzimierza Odojewskiego* the city of oblivion. Venice of WO], in: *Zapomniane, nieuśmierzone... Pamięć*, p 39. Rembowska-Płuciennik also highlights the excellence of Odojewski’s artistic efforts: “This must be one of a few texts by Odojewski where the protagonists manage to forget about the war (and the whole world!). Odojewski’s strategy shows masterfully perverse, for the city is obviously culturally associated with evanescence and death, it pushes death and war from the consciousness of both child and adult protagonists (p. 36).

⁶⁵G. Czerwiński, p. 269; see also. 206-207, as well as Anna Skibniewska *Jedźmy, ktoś woła* [let’s go, someone’s calling], *Arkusz* 2001, No 5, p. 10.

⁶⁶W. Odojewski, *Sezon....*, p. 50.

4. The element of writing

Working with hundreds of pages of the rough copies of Odojewski's short stories, analyzing the nuances, struggles and impasses that can be seen in the avant-texts of the beginnings of those stories, attempts at capturing certain tendencies in the recreated and read text-forming process – all that allowed me to meet a writer deep in editing work, entangled in “the writing process, which – according to Raymonde Debray-Genette'a – defines itself, having no definite beginning nor end”, as well as becomes sensitive “to what is changeable, [...] a system of changes”⁶⁷. Hence the reader and the scholar of Odojewski's manuscripts and typescripts experiences his conscientiousness and passion. We can experience the limitlessness and constant potentiality of the developing text.

The rough copies of the three short stories by Odojewski prove the huge amount of work of a writer whose artistic prose is predominantly about

inquiring, storytelling, whose aim is not to recreate some anecdote rooted in some non-textual reality, but rather to construct such a vision of literature whose sense is the process of storytelling; a vision of history whose prism model this literature is, and such a vision of reality that focuses in this model⁶⁸.

This is how tracing the transformations of the openings of those stories can imperceptibly offer an opportunity to take part in constructing a separate world, yet one strongly related to ours.

translated by Paulina Zagórska

⁶⁷R. Debray-Genette, *Mémoires du récit*, Seuil 1988, cited in: P-M. de Biasi, p. 143-144.

⁶⁸I. Iwasów, p. 174.

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KEYWORDS

m e m o r y

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WŁODZIMIERZ ODOJEWSKI

ABSTRACT:

The paper reconstructs and analyzes the avant-texts of three short stories by Włodzimierz Odojewski, representing the mature, late phase of his work: *Ku Dunzynańskiemu Wzgórzu idzie las*, *Co słycać w ojczyźnie*, *Sezon w Wenecji*. The paper is based on Odojewski's archive at the AMU Faculty of Polish and Classical Studies in Poznań. Subsequent editions of the opening paragraphs of the three stories mentioned above were selected as a special object of reconstruction and analysis. In the text-forming process of each one Odojewski edited the text several times. In each case a different tendency proved to be a superior characteristic of the writing effort – in one case the aim was to show a suspension of a protagonist's consciousness, in one – to postpone a meeting between the narrator and his old friend, and in one – reducing the temporal and personal distance. The genetics of selected texts by Odojewski provides significant clues and impulses for making new (or deepening and correcting the already existing) interpretations of the studied short stories.

archive of Włodzimierza Odojewskiego

text genetics

LITERARY ARCHIVE

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What Does the Philologist's Library Make Possible?

The Case of Stefan Szymutko

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The invisibility of libraries

(...) the one thing that I want the students to get out of the course (...) would be a sense that thinking is not something that happens abstractly. Philosophy is not something that happens purely in the abstract, purely in the mind, that it happens in relation to books that you're holding in your hand, and pencils, and pens, and marking and reading as this active material, technical process (...).¹

This is how Professor Katie Chenoweth, who studies Jacques Derrida's book collection at Princeton University, describes the goal of her course *Derrida's Library: Deconstruction and the Book*. Students learn about Derrida's philosophy by examining the marks and notes he

¹ *Derrida's Library: Deconstruction and the Book*, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sDhKk2QiVro&feature=youtu.be&t=222>.

left on books.² If we were to talk about “philology” (or “literary theory”) instead of “philosophy,” the point made by Chenoweth would still apply. Indeed, libraries of philologists (and more broadly: scholars in the humanities) may be treated as a source of promising research material, allowing scholars to analyze the relationships between “private” writings and “public” results. Libraries are “unofficial and inconspicuous places,”³ where intellectual inspirations, interests, ideas (both recorded and forgotten), professional and private acquaintances (or both), ways of reading fiction and academic texts, as well as various non-classifiable microtexts, are documented. While in the case of manuscripts, it is the archivist who creates the collection through selection and classification,⁴ private libraries are compiled by their owners. Of course, a book collection may be forgotten, dispersed, moved into a different library or completely destroyed, but even in a fragmentary or mediated form (through stories), it enables us to see how worldview, cultural and political situation and science are intertwined.

However, such initiatives as *Derrida's Library*, where the *oeuvre* of a given philosopher as well as the marks and notes he left in his books are analyzed, are rare. Libraries of literary scholars are still “invisible” in the contemporary humanities, which draw on heritage studies and various philosophical and cultural studies theories of the archive. Ironically, the Anglo-Saxon reception of Derrida's short dissertation *Mal d'archive: Une impression freudienne* [*Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*] contributed to the marginalization of this research question. Published in French in 1995, the book popularized the very concept of the “archive.”⁵⁶ According to the British historian Carolyn Steedman, the French philosopher ignored the meaning of the “archive” established in the humanities, i.e. the archive as an institution which functions in a specific time and place and organizes, stores and shares various types of documents. Instead, Derrida used the concept that has been traditionally associated with auxiliary sciences of history, a place where positivist philologists conduct their research, as a key metaphor in his complex argument. Consequently, as Steedman notes, scholars could comment extensively on the relationship between the “archive” and the second Freudian topic, the history of the metaphysics of presence or Foucauldian power-knowledge, while ignoring the “inconspicuous nature of the archive,” i.e. arduous work in libraries or repositories.⁷

² See Julie Clack and Nick Barberio, “Deconstructing Derrida”, 30 June 2020, <https://www.princeton.edu/news/2018/06/18/deconstructing-derrida>.

³ Magdalena Mazik, „Zaproszenie skierowane do wszystkich: biblioteka Mieczysława Porębskiego w MOCAK-u” [Invitation to everyone: Mieczysław Porębski's library at MOCAK], *Nowa Dekada Krakowska*, no. 3 (2013): 43.

⁴ Danuta Ulicka thus describes the creative nature of archival work: “I had the opportunity to observe how Yuri Lotman's archive in Tallinn was created, how a lorry of papers was turned into folders filled with documents, to which a future historian will find it difficult to find a key.” Danuta Ulicka, „Kontrowersyjne i niekontrowersyjne wartości archiwum” [Controversial and uncontroversial aspects of the archive], in *Różne głosy: prace ofiarowane Stanisławowi Balbusowi na jubileusz siedemdziesięciolecia* [Various voices: works given as a gift to Stanisław Balbus for his 70th anniversary], ed. Dorota Wojda, Magdalena Heydel, and Andrzej Hejmej (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 2013), 115.

⁵ Jacques Derrida and Daniel Ferrer, “Entre le corps écrivain et l'écriture...», entretien avec Daniel Ferrer”, *item Genesis* 17, no. 1 (2001): 59–72; Hélène Cixous and Daniel Ferrer, “Je suis d'abord une lisante...», entretien avec Daniel Ferrer”, *item Genesis* 17, no. 1 (2001): 45–57.

⁶ Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, trans. Eric Prenowitz (Paris: Éditions Galilée, 1996).

⁷ Carolyn Steedman, “Something She Called a Fever: Michelet, Derrida, and Dust”, *The American Historical Review* *The American Historical Review* 106, no. 4 (2001): 1161.

Indeed, the critical interest in Walter Benjamin's famous essay *Ich Packe Meine Bibliothek Aus: Eine Rede Uber das Sammeln* did not transform private libraries into critical objects of study.⁸ Private libraries are studied and analyzed in the greater context of the "material turn" or the "turn to things" only if they are part of an artistic installation that may be read through the lenses of the Derridean or Foucauldian "archive" (especially in art criticism).⁹ In French editorial studies, where, for example, notes on the margins of books are potentially interesting as a research problem from the point of view of the theory of the text, private libraries or book collections are never analyzed as a source of knowledge about the context of the creative writing process in the humanities. While Pierre-Marc de Biasi points out that "textual genetics" may be considered an auxiliary discipline for the broadly understood history of science, he does not think that book collections of scholars in the humanities constitute a separate (and interesting) research problem.¹⁰ Indeed, this problem has been addressed only two times in *Genesis*, the flagship journal of genetic criticism which has been published since 1992, in an interview with Derrida and in an interview with Hélène Cixous.¹¹

In the Polish humanities, private libraries of literary scholars, still associated with the stereotypical image of a noble and distant "professor," are analyzed almost exclusively in essays and articles published in special issues of journals devoted to the memory of a late scholar.¹² The vast majority of such articles, however, are written as biographical or even hagiographic essays, which often include lists of books. The commemorative and memorial context of the publication is not without significance for the form and content of the texts. In most

⁸ See Homi Bhabha, "Unpacking My Library Again", *The Journal of the Midwest Modern Language Association* 28, no. 1 (1995): 5–18; Joseph D. Lewandowski, "Unpacking: Walter Benjamin and His Library", *Libraries & Culture* 34, no. 2 (1999): 151–57; Alberto Manguel, *Packing My Library: An Elegy and Ten Digressions*. (London: Yale University Press, 2019).

⁹ Shep Steiner, "Rozpakowując (Ich) Biblioteki – o Umiejscawianiu Dwóch Politycznych Archiwów" [Unpacking (Their) Libraries: On Locating the Radical Archives of Walter Benjamin and Martha Rosler], *Tytuł Roboczy: Archiwum/Archive*, no. 3 (2009): 25–31 (the essay is devoted to *The Martha Rosler Archive*, installation exhibited by the artist in various forms since 2005); Tomasz Załuski, "Archiwum, czyli podmiot na półce" [Archive, or the subject on a shelf], *Tytuł roboczy: Archiwum/Archive*, no. 3 (2009): 28–29 (a response to Steiner's essay).

¹⁰ "(...) almost all of the humanities and social sciences also have some direct connection with the genetics of the text (...)" Pierre-Marc de Biasi, *Génétiq ue des textes* (Paris: CNRS, 2011), 184–5.

¹¹ Jacques Derrida and Daniel Ferrer, "« Entre le corps écrivain et l'écriture... », entretien avec Daniel Ferrer", *Genesis* 17, no. 1 (2001): 59–72; Hélène Cixous and Daniel Ferrer, "« Je suis d'abord une lisante... », entretien avec Daniel Ferrer", *Genesis* 17, no. 1 (2001): 45–57.

¹² Cf. *inter alia*: C. Kłak *Biblioteka i glosy Stanisława Pigońa* [Library and voices of Stanisław Pigoń]; L. Forczek *Księgozbiór Stanisława Pigońa w Bibliotece Głównej rzeszowskiej WSP* [Stanisław Pigoń's book collection in the Main Library of WSP in Rzeszów], in: *Wokół Stanisława Pigońa. Nad warsztatem naukowym i literackim Uczzonego* [Around Stanisław Pigoń: On the scholar's scientific and literary workshop], ed. C. Kłak, Krajowa Agencja Wydawnicza, Rzeszów 1983; I. Płukis *Biblioteka Konrada Górskiego w zbiorach Towarzystwa Naukowego w Toruniu* [Konrad Górski's Library in the collection of the Scientific Society in Toruń], in: *Konrada Górskiego świat literatury, teatru i języka. Materiały konferencji zorganizowanej w setną rocznicę urodzin Profesora* [Konrad Górski's world of literature, theater and language: Proceedings from the conference organized to commemorate the hundredth anniversary of Professor Górski's birth], ed. W. Sawrycki, J. Speina, Towarzystwo Naukowe w Toruniu–Uniwersytet Mikołaja Kopernika w Toruniu, Toruń 1996; B. Chodźko *Dary dla Marii Renaty Mayenowej. Rękopiśmienne dedykacje w księgozbiorze MRM* [Gifts for Maria Renata Mayenowa: Handwritten dedications in MRM's book collection], in: *Obecność. Maria Renata Mayenowa (1908-1988)* [Presence: Maria Renata Mayenowa (1908-1988)], ed. B. Chodźko, E. Feliksiak, M. Olesiewicz, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu w Białymstoku, Białystok 2006; M. Mikiewicz *Biblioteka* [Library], in: *Erazm Kuźma. Słownik biografii i idei* [Erazm Kuźma: Dictionary of biography and ideas], ed. J. Madejski, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Szczecińskiego, Szczecin 2016.

articles, the book collection and the textual (and not only textual) traces it contains are analyzed in order to create or consolidate the public image of its former owner in the academic community.

While they are often presented by libraries and other cultural institutions in the form of memorial exhibition rooms,¹³ private book collections of philologists paradoxically still wait to be discovered. Indeed, it is time to confront the research potential hidden on the margins of books read by philologists with the study of a specific case. I will not analyze the library of a well-established literature critic, such as Stanisław Pigoń, Henryk Markiewicz or Wacław Borowy. Their private libraries have already been inscribed in the consciousness of the Polish humanities, for better or worse. The library of Stefan Szymutko, a Silesian literary scholar and essayist, known mostly, if not exclusively, for his book of essays *Nagrobek ciotki Cili* [Aunt Cila's tombstone], has never been analyzed. Located in the vestibule of the secretarial office at the College of Individual Interdisciplinary Studies at the University of Silesia, it deserves critical attention because the queries conducted in it provided "facts and clues that complicate what we know and believe to be true" about Szymutko.¹⁴

Notes, marks and flashcards as a source of discoveries

At the most basic level, research conducted at Szymutko's library brought to light and critical attention the essay *Niepokój zwyczajności* [The restless everyday], which was neither included in the only available bibliographical list of Szymutko's works¹⁵ nor discussed by its author.¹⁶ However, Szymutko's library is worthy of critical attention for reasons that go beyond "discovering" a text that has not been included in official bibliographies. Szymutko's library is the only relatively complete excerpt from the philologist's lost archive. Szymutko died suddenly, failing to officially donate his materials to a specific institution. As his relatives emphasized many times in private conversations, Szymutko wrote most of his articles on a computer, which was disposed of a few years after his death. Respectively, after some time, Szymutko threw away handwritten notes, typescripts or even private letters. Notes, marks and flashcards in his books – the testimonies of his writerly presence – are therefore the only source of knowledge that cannot be found in the official body of Szymutko's texts.

It should be emphasized that contrary to initial expectations the works of Martin Heidegger, Derrida or Gilles Deleuze, i.e. the authors whom the Silesian philologist referred to the most in his late essays (especially in *Nagrobek ...*), are not the source of many discoveries. Szymut-

¹³As was the case with, for example, Mieczysław Porębski's library, which may be studied at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Kraków.

¹⁴This is how Danuta Ulicka wrote about the innovative nature of the Dawid Hopensztand archive she discovered, see Danuta Ulicka, "«Archiwum» i archiwum" ['The archive' and the archive], *Teksty Drugie : teoria literatury, krytyka, interpretacja*. 2017 (2017): 301.

¹⁵Alicja Szałagan, "Stefan Szymutko (1958-2009)", *Polscy pisarze i badacze literatury przełomu XX i XXI wieku* [Polish writers and literary scholars at the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries], 23 April 2019, http://www.ppihl.waw.pl/mediawiki/index.php?title=Stefan_SZYMUTKO.

¹⁶Stefan Szymutko, „Niepokój zwyczajności” [The restless everyday], in *Poszukiwanie realności: literatura, dokument, kresy. Prace ofiarowane Tadeuszowi Bujnickiemu* [Searching for reality: Literature, document, borderlands: Works for Tadeusz Bujnicki], ed. Stanisław Gawliński and Wojciech Ligęza (Kraków: Universitas, 2003), 233–38.

ko limited his reading of philosophical texts to writing down page numbers and key words (which referred to the most interesting parts of the text) on flashcards, which he later used in his essays. An exception to this rule is Szymutko's copy of the first edition of Derrida's *Of Grammatology*. A certain pattern emerges in the notes:

98 – difference in recording body [EPILOGUE]
 103 – desire to be present [EPILOGUE]
 and Thoth in The Phaedrus (SiC)
 (...)
 133 – silent signifier [EPILOGUE]
 (...)
 175 – savage: silent (SiC)
 319 – supplement as a source
 [POSSIBLY: POST-EPILOGUE]¹⁷

Notes in square brackets suggest that Szymutko intended to use the quotes in his new book. However, they are nowhere to be found in *Nagrobek... or Przeciw marzeniu?* [Against the dream?]. Most likely, Szymutko planned to use the selected fragments of *Of Grammatology* in a new collection of essays on Silesia, which he did not have time to write,¹⁸ or, as the acronym "SiC" indicates, in an unwritten book on Teodor Parnicki's *Słowo i ciało* [Word and body]. In this particular case, the notes indicate what Szymutko had planned to write. The copy of Derrida's book is interesting for one more reason. Let us look at the following quote:

One does not ask how much of presence and how much of representation are found in presence.¹⁹

Szymutko wrote on the margin: "Maybe one does ask nevertheless." This slightly humorous remark suggests that the philologist studied the problem of inalienable and indisputable reality: he also commented on it in the notes left on the margins of his other books.

The study of Szymutko's library also allows us to reconstruct (of course, always with slight hesitation) the fundamental problems of practically inaccessible texts, such as, for example, his M.A. thesis devoted to the analysis of time and space in Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz's *Czerwone tarcze* [Red shields]. Let us look at a number of remarks Szymutko made on the margins of Iwaszkiewicz's novel:

¹⁷Polish version: Jacques Derrida, *O grammatologii*, trans. Bogdan Banasiak (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo KR, Robert Reszke, 1999) Stefan Szymutko's Library [hereinafter referred to as SSL], ref. no. 155. The reference numbers are consistent with the collection's catalog I received from Kalina Jaglarz, who is in charge of the collection. If no reference number is given, I use "[n.d.]" instead. I mark the omitted fragments of the notes with an ellipsis sign. I mark illegible fragments with "[?]". The spelling of Szymutko's notes is original.

¹⁸In an interview from 2003, Szymutko talked about his plans to write a new book: "I hope that I will one day come back to Silesia of my childhood and youth (...) I will write about people who do not appear in *Nagrobek* ... or are mentioned only briefly." Stefan Szymutko, „Ciotka Cila idzie do Europy. Ze Stefanem Szymutką rozmowę przeprowadziła Wiesława Konopelska" [Aunt Cila goes to Europe: Wiesława Konopelska interviews Stefan Szymutka], in *Po co literatura jeszcze jest? Pisma rozproszone* [What is literature still for? Scattered writings], ed. Grzegorz Olszański and Mariusz Jochemczyk (Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, 2013), 217.

¹⁹Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2016), 322.

In Red S., reality is (usually) a system that tests all concepts²⁰
 concrete life (current history begins to prevail again)²¹
 Compromised word²²

These insightful notes on the margins of *Czerwone tarcze* demonstrate that the philologist first experimented with the concept of the word in the context of non-linguistic history when he was writing his M.A. thesis. He further developed this problem in his doctoral dissertation devoted to Teodor Parnicki's *Koniec "Zgody Narodów"* [The End of "peace among nations"]. Moreover, the notes in which Szymutko summarized individual chapters also contain ideas that he would develop in his later essays:

as it has already been said, art is breaking out from (...) real time, just as the artistic space is breaking out from a real space with its own 1) political 2) religious 3) and social baggage²³

The world functions in two ways: the subject penetrates it in order to evoke the image of the past, but eventually it is the world that evokes this moment, and it does not always correspond to what the subject intended.²⁴

Notes in Iwaszkiewicz's novel force us to revise the opinion that it was only in his doctoral dissertation that Szymutko "came up with" the problem of the relationship between the subject, language, text, and reality, which he later studied throughout his entire academic career. It turns out that Szymutko had interpreted literary texts in terms of topics and problems that he defined as essential at the end of his life already at the beginning of the 1980s.²⁵ For example, in Janusz Sławiński's introduction to the book *Przestrzeń i literatura* [Space and literature], Szymutko thus comments on Sławiński's observation that "the represented space may emerge from the text only to the extent to which it was designed in it (...)" by means of descriptive sentences:

It only appears to be the case; in Iwaszkiewicz's novel descriptive sentences shape the space only slightly: the space emerges on the margins of the story.²⁶

Szymutko developed the problem of storytelling on the margins and the non-linguistic reality "on the margin of the word" twenty years later in a paper devoted to Sławiński's *Semantyka wypowiedzi*

²⁰Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz, *Czerwone tarcze* [Red shields] (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 1971), 103 SSL, ref. no. 1802.

²¹Iwaszkiewicz, 94.

²²Iwaszkiewicz, 181.

²³Iwaszkiewicz, 189.

²⁴Iwaszkiewicz, 194.

²⁵See: Stefan Szymutko, „Zaczyn” [Leaven], in *Po co literatura jeszcze jest? Pisma rozproszone*, ed. Grzegorz Olszański and Mariusz Jochemczyk (Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, 2013), 175–91.

²⁶Janusz Sławiński, „Przestrzeń w literaturze: elementarne rozróżnienia i wstępne oczywistości” [Space in literature: Elementary distinctions and preliminary obvious statements], in *Przestrzeń i literatura* [Space and literature], ed. Aleksander Okopień-Sławiński and Michał Głowiński (Wrocław: Ossolineum, 1978), 16 SSL, ref. no. [n.d.].

narracyjnej [Semantics of the narrative utterance].²⁷ Extensive notes made by Szymutko on the copy of Miron Białoszewski's *Odczepić się* [Unhinge] further confirm that the philologist had consistently been working with a specific set of topics and problems.²⁸ Szymutko thus sums up his – unfortunately partially illegible – analysis of the poem *Lato jak liść w rowie* [Summer like a leaf in a ditch]:

It does not end with exaltation, there are things that crush exaltation into dust, like the uprising (...) ²⁹

The analogy between Warsaw in the sun and Warsaw in the Uprising is discredited; it is revealed how insignificant the comparison to reality is. The image of Warsaw created with the help of uprising terms is an illusion; the real image of Warsaw is something far more important. That is why I criticize, that is why I distance myself from the meaning expressed in the title (an autonomous creation): not everything may be thus colored as it was in the previous poem. (...) ³⁰

Such an interpretation of Białoszewski's poem, which Szymutko wrote, most likely, at an early stage of his university education,³¹ could also appear in *Przeciw marzeniu?* – his last book published during his lifetime, in which he asked, “how reality hinders literature, literary imagination, and dreams.”³²

A separate category of interesting pre-texts are flashcards (notes, summaries) at the end of fiction or academic books that Szymutko, most likely, intended to review. Such notes give us insight into unwritten reviews and also testify to the philologist's interest in the subjective aspect of critical and theoretical texts. For example, in Ryszard Nycz's *Literatura jako trop rzeczywistości* [Literature as a trace of reality], Szymutko was interested not so much in the concept presented in the book, but in Nycz's worldview or even his personality:

1) Nycz is very cynical – the man is only culture, besides that: the darkness of biology

(...)

6) Nycz is very dark: he does not create, nihilism, passing, impermanence

(...)

10) Nycz is presumptuous – you have to notice that (see, especially, Białoszewski)³³

²⁷Stefan Szymutko, „Semantyka wypowiedzi narracyjnej – problemów ciąg dalszy” [Semantics of the narrative utterance: Further problems], in *Przeciw marzeniu?: Jedenaście przykładów, ośmiu pisarzy* [Against the dream?: Eleven examples, eight writers] (Katowice: Wydawn. Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, 2006), 33. This article was first published in *Sporne i bezsporne problemy współczesnej wiedzy o literaturze* [Disputable and undisputable problems in contemporary literary studies] (ed. J. Abramowska, W. Bolecki, R. Nycz, Warsaw 2002). It is a longer version of a paper delivered by Szymutko at a conference organized by the Institute of Literary Research of the Polish Academy of Sciences in 2001.

²⁸Szymutko wrote his first academic paper on Białoszewski (see Stefan Szymutko, “Blaski i cienie Helikonu na Marszałkowskiej” [The lights and shadows of Helikon on Marszałkowska], in *W kręgu dwudziestowiecznego realizmu* [In the circles of twentieth-century realism,] ed. Włodzimierz Wójcik (Wydawn. Uniw. Śląskiego, 1983), 91–107). He primarily analyzed *Szумы, zlepy, ciągi* [Noises, clumps, strings] in it. The observations made by Szymutko on the margins of *Odczepić się* were not used in this article.

²⁹Miron Białoszewski, *Odczepić się* [Unhinge] (Warsaw: Państwowy instytut wydawniczy, 1978), 48 SSL, ref. no. 781.

³⁰Białoszewski, 49.

³¹This is evidenced by the fact that the notes on *Odczepić się* and *Czerwone tarcze* are similar in size and complexity. When he started to work on his doctoral dissertation, Szymutko copied most of his comments on flashcards.

³²Stefan Szymutko, *Przeciw marzeniu?: Jedenaście przykładów, ośmiu pisarzy* (Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, 2006), 7.

³³Ryszard Nycz, *Literatura jako trop rzeczywistości: poetyka epifanii w nowoczesnej literaturze polskiej* [Literature as a trace of reality: The poetics of epiphany in new Polish literature] (Kraków: Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych „Universitas”, 2001) SSL, ref. no. 577.

Szymutko made the following comments on his copy of Krzysztof Uniłowski's *Koloniści i koczownicy* [Colonists and nomads]:

- 2) Well, he likes to stir the waters: in a fishing sense – the title of the review: The Stirrer
 (...)

12) U does not want to see: reality is dangerous
 (...)

77 –KU's nihilism³⁴

In such notes, Szymutko primarily paid attention to stylistic details and the manner in which the author developed their argument. He accused Nycz of, among others, arbitrary selection of quotes or even “blackmailing readers with quotes,” observing at the same time that “well-chosen quotes” “supposedly [exemplify] the same strategy, but it is something else.” Respectively, in Dariusz Nowacki's *Wielkie wczoraj* [The great yesterday], Szymutko saw “Quotes – clichés,” “Archaisms: alas, Gad, erst,” and the language of advertising slogans.³⁵ In Przemysław Czapliński's *Mikrologi ze śmiercią* [Micrologues with death], he pointed out that the author used the same narrative trick in all essays in the book:

detective revival of the argument – isn't it too easy, isn't it too inadequate?³⁶

Szymutko also criticized Czapliński for “intellectualizing” and “intellectualizing as the experience of the speaker,” thus demonstrating that he is critical of the unwritten rules of academic writing.³⁷ But why did the philologist focus so much on the linguistic layer of the works he read? We may assume that he believed that literary and critical texts should be governed by similar poetics. Szymutko analyzed this topic in essays devoted to Janusz Sławiński.³⁸ He also suggested several times that the “academic” and the “literary” come together in his texts, creating within them a unique mode of expression.³⁹ However, we are only able to understand how important this topic was for Szymutko, and how closely it was related to his mode of reading literary works, when we analyze the books in his private collection. Szymutko further comments on this question in the notes he made for his unwritten reviews:

³⁴Krzysztof Uniłowski, *Koloniści i koczownicy: o najnowszej prozie i krytyce literackiej* [Colonists and nomads: On the latest prose and literary criticism] (Kraków: Universitas, 2002) SSL, ref. no. 1345.

³⁵Dariusz Nowacki, *Wielkie wczoraj* [The great yesterday] (Kraków: Zielona Sowa, 2004) SSL, ref. no. 667.

³⁶Przemysław Czapliński, *Mikrologi ze śmiercią: motywy tanatyczne we współczesnej literaturze polskiej* [Micrologues with death: Thanatian motifs in contemporary Polish literature] (Poznań: Poznańskie Studia Polonistyczne, 2001) SSL, ref. no. 1833. In the note on the side, Szymutko explains why he thinks that Czapliński's book reads like a “detective” story: “there is a mystery in every essay.”

³⁷Szymutko criticizes them, among others in the introduction to his habilitation dissertation, see Stefan Szymutko, “Niewyrażalna i niedostępna rzeczywistość” [Inexpressible and inaccessible reality], in *Rzeczywistość jako zwątpienie w literaturze i literaturoznawstwie* [Reality as doubt in literature and literary studies] (Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, 1998), 9–31.

³⁸See Stefan Szymutko, „Ciało profesora Sławińskiego” [Professor Sławiński's body], *Teksty Drugie: teoria literatury, krytyka, interpretacja* 4, no. 28 (1994): 43–52; Stefan Szymutko, „Bycie humanistą. O artykułach Janusza Sławińskiego w «Tekstach» (1972-1981)” [Being a humanist: Janusz Sławiński's articles in „Teksty” (1972-1981)], in *Po co literatura jeszcze jest? Pisma rozproszone*, ed. Grzegorz Olszański and Mariusz Jochemczyk (Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, 2013), 119–23.

³⁹“As a literary scholar, I have an incredible opportunity to prepare: as a writer, I look around in literature, I look for a potential place for myself (...), I practice tricks on the sidelines (i.e. in (supposedly) academic texts, I quietly prepare myself for literature).” Szymutko, “Zaczyn”, 182.

- 4) Felling so close to one another: the nameless [?]
- 5) Post-new wave poetical language: breaking clichés etc.
(...)
- 8) Text corrected [?] stylistically? – what does that mean? A poet! Bring out the meaning of formulas⁴⁰

Although it is difficult to say what Szymutko meant by saying that he “feels close” to Uniłowski,⁴¹ the fact that he draws attention to Uniłowski’s “post-new wave” style in the next comment leads us to perhaps the most interesting discovery. Szymutko’s copy of *Spór o poezję* [Dispute about poetry], with new-wave manifestos of the Silesian poetry group “Kontekst” [Context] (Tadeusz Sławek, Andrzej Szuba, Stanisław Piskor and Wojciech Paźniewski), is full of marks and notes.⁴² Certain problematic consistency may be found in the fragments of essays that Szymutko most likely commented on when he was still a student. They all concern the relationship between the artistic form and reality, defined by the members of “Kontekst” in terms of historically changing conditions of social communication.⁴³ As we know, Szymutko had been interested in the relationship between semantics of reality and literary texts throughout his academic career, as exemplified by his studies of Parnicki’s writing and his late essays.⁴⁴ However, Szymutko never openly stated in his published texts that he found inspiration in the aesthetic program of “Kontekst,”⁴⁵ which he may have known firsthand. Therefore, it is possible that it was *Spór o poezję* and the young Silesian literary and academic community⁴⁶ that constituted a point of reference for Szymutko’s early criticism.⁴⁷

Apart from smaller traces,⁴⁸ such a hypothesis is confirmed by *Zrozumieć Parnickiego* [Understanding Parnicki], the book version of Szymutko’s doctoral thesis, in which the scholar discussed an

⁴⁰Uniłowski, *Koloniści i koczownicy*.

⁴¹Apart from the obvious fact that both scholars were colleagues, or even friends, as confirmed by Uniłowski’s dedications in books given to Szymutko.

⁴²Włodzimierz Paźniewski et al., *Spór o poezję* [Dispute about poetry] (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1977) SSL, ref. no. 1226.

⁴³I discuss this question in more detail in: “Rzeczywistość w stanie wyjątkowym – filolog – literatura. Dwa komentarze do praktyk filologicznych Stefana Szymutki” [Reality in a state of emergency - philologist - literature: Two comments on the philological practices of Stefan Szymutko], in *Imiona anomii: literatura wobec doświadczenia stanu wyjątkowego* [Names of anomie: Literature in the face of the experience of the state of emergency], ed. Piotr Sadzik (Warsaw: PWN, 2019), 321–49.

⁴⁴Cf. Stefan Szymutko, „Parnicki - ostatni pisarz bytu” [Parnicki - the last writer of being], in *Po co literatura jeszcze jest? Pisma rozproszone*, ed. Grzegorz Olszański and Mariusz Jochemczyk (Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, 2013), 27–37; Szymutko, „Niewyraźalna i niedostępna rzeczywistość”.

⁴⁵Szymutko’s debut text, his review of Piskor’s novel *Ruchomy kraj* [Moving country] (*Poglądy*, no. 8 (1981): 12), suggests that as well.

⁴⁶In 1980 or 1981, an essay by Szymutko was to be published in a book edited by Andrzej Szuba and Marek Pytasz devoted to the Silesian artistic circles (I provide this information after: “Wydawnictwo «Śląsk» przygotowuje almanach literacki «Młode środowisko literackie». Z Witoldem Nawrockim rozmawiał Janusz Karkoszka” [The publishing house “Śląsk” is preparing the literary almanac “Young literary community.” Janusz Karkoszka interviews Witold Nawrocki], *Trybuna Robotnicza*, no. 19 (1980): 3). The book was probably never published, and instead, in 1981 the publishing house “Śląsk” began publishing the series *Studio. Almanach literacko-artystyczny* [Studio: A literary and artistic almanac]. However, Szymutko never published in *Studio*.

⁴⁷Szymutko underlined this quote from *Spór o poezję*: “(...) if you constantly set your sails to catch new winds and explore new routes, you are not an avant-garde artist. You are a true avant-garde artist, if you go ‘deep into the structure’ of a given epoch or a certain period.” Paźniewski et al., *Spór o poezję*, 154. See Paweł Sarna, *Śląska awangarda: poeci grupy Kontekst* [The Silesian avant-garde: poets of the Kontekst group] (Katowice: Katowickie Stowarzyszenie Artystyczne, 2004), 28–35.

⁴⁸For example, in an article about Białoszewski, Szymutko refers to exactly the same fragment of an interview with Białoszewski as Piskor in *Spór o poezję*. Of course, Szymutko underlined the quotation in his copy of the book. See Szymutko, „Blaski i cienie Helikonu na Marszałkowskiej”, 91; Paźniewski et al., *Spór o poezję*, 29.

innovative method of reading Parnicki's novel.⁴⁹ At the end of the book, Parnicki is praised for creating a "new perception of reality in literature."⁵⁰ According to the philologist, Parnicki's novels are an inspiration for "the cultural avant-garde of the future."⁵¹ Such remarks are rooted in the avant-garde understanding of literary form as a harmony between the structure of the text and the structure of the epoch in which it is created, characteristic for "Kontekst." It turns out that Szymutko's book, which gave rise to the so-called Silesian school of Parnicki and is thus considered his most "academic" publication, has a lot in common with the aesthetic program of the "Kontekst" poetry group.

The study of Szymutko's private library is a source of new and insightful observations, so much so that private libraries of literary scholars should become an obligatory object of study in the cultural history of philology. The analyzed textual traces found in books allowed me to discuss Szymutko's unpublished (and sometimes unwritten) interpretative ideas and they also remind us of an apparently obvious thing: "Behind the auctorial narrative of academic works" there is always a real person, rooted in time and space, with his "personal anxieties," beliefs, likes and dislikes.⁵² Notes, marks and flashcards found in Szymutko's book collection make us reflect on the author's presence in all philological texts, regardless of their superficial stylistic features. Therefore, they allow us to notice the initial context of an academic text, which either becomes blurred in the process of canonization and depersonalization, or, as in the case of Szymutko, remains unnoticed. Notes and marks in books also prove that the stereotype of the library of a scholar in the humanities as a black box, criticized by Julian Krzyżanowski in 1939, in which "idleness," "indolence," and "detachment from everyday life" are cultivated, is simply false.⁵³ As Peter Burke writes,

(...) knowledge is situated, in contrast to the traditional view of scholars as remote from the world, in laboratories, observatories, libraries and other ivory towers. Scholars do need 'a space of their own' in order to work without distraction, but this remoteness is only relative. They take the world (...) into the lab with them (...).⁵⁴

translated by Małgorzata Olsza

⁴⁹I discuss Szymutko's doctoral thesis in more detail in "Additional Problems with Stefan Szymutko's History", *Forum of Poetics*, no. 6 (2016): 68–79.

⁵⁰Stefan Szymutko, *Zrozumieć Parnickiego* [Understanding Parnicki] (Katowice: Gnome Books, 1992), 228.

⁵¹Szymutko, 221.

⁵²Szymutko, „Bycie humanistą. O artykułach Janusza Sławińskiego w «Tekstach» (1972-1981)", 109.

⁵³Julian Krzyżanowski, „Uwagi o studiach polonistycznych" [Notes on Polish studies], in *Uniwersyteckie Studium Polonistyczne: Informator* [Polish Studies Department at The University of Warsaw: Brochure] (Warsaw: Koło Polonistów Studentów Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego im. Józefa Piłsudskiego, 1939), 14. I would like to thank Marzena Franke, head of the Waclaw Borowy Library at the Faculty of Polish Studies at the University of Warsaw, for showing me the brochure.

⁵⁴P. Burke, *A social history of knowledge*, vol. 2, Polity, Cambridge 2000, p. 4.

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KEYWORDS

STEFAN SZYMUTKO

philology

ABSTRACT:

In the first part of the article, I demonstrate that private libraries of scholars in the humanities (including literary scholars) have still not become legitimate objects of study and explain the reasons behind it. In the second part of the article, I analyze a case study: Stefan Szymutko's book collection. The analysis of notes, marks and flashcards found on the margins of books demonstrates that various types of pre-texts and "soft facts" allow scholars to expand their knowledge about Szymutko as an academic, literary critic, and writer.

libraries of scholars in the humanities

PRIVATE LIBRARIES

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The Image of China in the Eurasianist Ideal of Boris Pilnyak: From the Imaginary to the Documentary*

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As a writer who witnessed the entire process of Russia's transition from its imperial to Soviet period, Boris Pilnyak (1894–1938) chronicled the life of the Russian people in social and political unrest in his fragmentary language style. While his works contain a kaleidoscope of new questions, ideas and phenomena that writers of an older generation could not anticipate, Pilnyak inherited a mythical vision of Asia and China prevailing among poets and writers of the Silver Age. What sets him apart is, *inter alia*, that he was not confined to some “imaginative travelling” to East Asia, but enjoyed a privileged experience of life in the Far East encountering people of China and Japan in their everyday living conditions. What is more, the cultural-political ideal linked to the myth of China found a new brand in

Pilnyak's time, a brand that became known as Eurasianism in the early 1920s.¹ These circumstances helped to create Pilnyak's unique viewpoint in his literary excursions to China, which in turn reflected his rumination on the historical life and vocation of Russia, which underwent continuous change throughout his literary career along with the vicissitudes of the Russian nation.

Pilnyak's conception of China continued the palimpsestic inscription of the myth of China in the Russian cultural milieu, in the sense that China figures in his works written before 1920 largely as a product of poetic imagination. His fantastic vision of China involves an uncircumscribed use of poetic license, which in turn generates different symbolic meanings of China in his novel *The Naked Year* (*Golyi god*, published in 1922). From 1922 on, China in Pilnyak's works acquired completely new implications. Two stories, "Sankt-Piter-Burkh" (published in 1922) and "The Big Heart" ("Bol'shoe serdtse", published in 1927), show, on the one hand, his knowledge of Chinese history and society, and reflect, on the other, the impact of contemporary events on his understanding of China. The writing of "Sankt-Piter-Burkh" was associated with the Xinhai Revolution that broke out in October 1911 and eventually ended China's imperial history. Similarly, "The Big Heart" was written in the wake of the May Thirteenth Movement, an anti-imperialist strike and demonstration that occurred in Shanghai in May 1925. The anti-imperial and nationalistic sentiments aroused by these two events proved to be influential on Pilnyak's composition of these two pieces. Pilnyak spent the summer of 1926 in China as a government representative with the task to create a firsthand report of life in Republican China and to establish the Chinese-Russian Literary-Artistic Association. Both his newly acquired knowledge about China and personal contact with its people challenged and altered his mythical vision of the country, and provided materials for a realistic depiction of China in his "Chinese Diary" ("Kitaiskii dnevnik", 1927), which introduced to the Soviet readers a China in social turmoil that might have reminded them of their own country of the recent past.

As it turns out, Pilnyak's early vision of China had little to do with the reality of Chinese modernity. The most impressive implication of this vision appears in the novel *Naked Year* (completed in 1920), where he uses the symbolic image of "China-town" (*Kitai-gorod*)² as the uniting element of a lyrical "refrain" that stands outside the narrative frames of any of the fragmentary events in the novel, but contains a thematic core that links the surround-

¹ Russian Eurasianism is originally a Russian emigre intellectual movement in the 1920s that accentuated the historical homogeneity, cultural kinship and economic connections between Russian and Asian civilizations, primarily nomadic empires. For the different proponents of Eurasianism, the conception of Eurasia had different centers, peripheries, structures and borders, while the relationship between Russia, Eurasia and China bore different meanings and implications. For a brief introduction of the movement, see Mark Bassin, Sergey Glebov and Marlene Laruelle, "What Was Eurasianism and Who Made It?" in *Between Europe and Asia: The Origins, Theories, and Legacies of Russian Eurasianism*, edited by Mark Bassin, Sergey Glebov and Marlene Laruelle, 1-12 (Pittsburg: University of Pittsburg Press, 2015).

² In reality *Kitai-gorod* denotes a historical district in Moscow, an area surrounded by the "Chinatown Wall" (*Kitai-gorodskaia krepostnaia stena*) built in 1538 as a fortification and razed in subsequent history. *Kitai-gorod* served as an aristocratic district in the 16th century, and later developed into the trading and cultural center of Moscow. The name origin of *Kitai-gorod* is still disputable: One common explanation is that it originates from the word "kita", which means "the binding of poles", thus reflecting the construction of the fortification. See Aleksandr Prokhorov, ed., *Bol'shaia sovetskaia entsiklopediia* (Moscow: Sov. entsiklopediia, 1973), vol. 12, 242.

ing events together.³ In this refrain, which appears first early in the book and then towards the end of it, he portrays three “China-towns” – those of Moscow, Nizhny Novgorod, and Ordynin – in the pattern of a “trptych”, i.e. in the form of three panels standing independently from each other but paralleling each other in structure. In each of these panels the China-town assumes the appearance of a collage that consists of freely assembled pieces appealing to different sensations. Both objects and their properties – shapes, colors, textures, smells, etc. – are arranged in such a way as to maximize the ornamental and impressionistic effect. In spite of the spatial disorder, one observes in the depiction of the first two China-towns a temporal sequence: the Moscow China-town shows a contrast between day and night, while the Nizhny Novgorod one demonstrates a contrast between fall and winter. Each component of these temporal pairs is tied to corresponding sensations and undertones:

In the daytime China-town stirred with a million people and a million human lives – in bowler hats, in felt hats and homespun coats – itself in a bowler hat and with a briefcase of bonds, shares, invoices, bills of exchange – of ikons, skins, manufactured goods, raisins, gold, platinum, Martyanich vodka – a virtual Europe, all bowlered. – But at night the bowlers disappeared from the stone side-streets and town houses, emptiness and silence arrived, the dogs roamed about, and the streetlamps shone funereally among the stones, and people, as rare as dogs, and wearing peaked caps, walked only into and out of Zaryadye. And then in this desert out of the town houses and from under the gates crawled: China without a bowler hat on, the Heavenly Empire, which lies somewhere beyond the steppes to the East, beyond the Great Stone Wall, and looks at the world with slanting eyes, like the buttons of Russian soldier’s greatcoats. This is one Chinatown.⁴

[...]

In Nizhni-Novgorod, in Kanavino, beyond Makarye, where along the Makarye the same Moscow daytime Ilinka squatted on its huge behind, in November after the September millions of poods, barrels, pieces, arshins, and quarters of goods, exchanged for rubles, francs, marks, pounds, dollars, lira, etc., after the October debauchery, under the curtain of the Volga flood of wines, caviar, “Venice”, “Tartar”, “Persian”, “Chinese,” and liters of spermatozoa – in November in Kanavino, in the snow, from the boarded-up stalls, from the dismantled booths, from the emptiness – looking through the soldier’s buttons instead of eyes – it: the China of nocturnal Moscow, and the one

³ Gary Browning has discussed Pilnyak’s use of this specific device, which he names as the “accretive refrain”, in *Naked Year*. See Gary Browning, *Boris Pilniak: Scythian at a Typewriter* (Ann Arbor: Ardis Publishers, 1985), 120-125. Robert Maguire underlines Pilnyak’s predilection to repetition that draws upon an artistic repertoire of incidents, images and themes. His catalogue of images, stylistically organized in a paratactic structure, often serves allegorical functions. See Robert Maguire, *Red Virgin Soil: Soviet Literature in the 1920’s* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2000), 118-124.

⁴ Boris Pilnyak, *The Naked Year*, trans. Alexander Tulloch (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1975), 31-32. “Днем Китай-Город, за китайской стеной, ворочался миллионом людей и миллионом человеческих жизней — в котелках, в фетровых шляпах и зипунах, — сам в котелке и с портфелем облигаций, акций, векселей, накладных, биржи, — икон, кож, мануфактур, изюмов, золота, платины, Мартьяныча, — весь в котелке, совсем Европа. — А ночью из каменных закоулков и с подворий исчезали котелки, приходили безлюдье и безмолье, рыскали собаки, и мертво горели фонари среди камней, и лишь из Зарядья и в Зарядье шли люди, редкие, как собаки, и в картузах. И тогда в этой пустыне из подворий и подворотен выползал тот: Китай без котелка, Небесная Империя, что лежит где-то за степями на востоке, за Великой Каменной Стеной, и смотрит на мир раскосыми глазами, похожими на пуговицы русских солдатских шинелей. — Это один Китай-Город.” (Boris Pilnyak, *Sobranie Sochinenii* (Moscow: Gos. izd-vo., 1929), vol. 1, 55)

concealed behind the Great Stone Wall. Silence. Inscrutability. Without a bowler hat on. Soldiers' buttons instead of eyes.⁵

Moscow China-town at daytime is a marketplace: it is associated with merchants wearing "bowler hats" and all kinds of goods they bring with them, which has turned it to "virtual Europe". Much of the same can be said about the Nizhny Novgorod China-town in September and October, which is equally presented as a meeting place for traders, except that here "European" brands are juxtaposed with Asian ones – "Tatar", "Persian" and "Chinese". The two China-towns are transformed into empty and silent spaces at night and in winter respectively. What is significant is not only that the appearance of China-towns dramatically changes in cyclical patterns, but also that their existence changes accordingly both on the geographical and metaphysical level. The "Chinese wall" of daytime, which refers to the medieval fortification that surrounds the Moscow China-town, is replaced at night by the Great Wall of China, while China-town, the trade center of the city, is projected outside of Russia onto the "Heavenly Empire", gazing at Russia not with eyes but through the "buttons of Russian soldiers' overcoats". This image appears again in the third China-town of Ordynin, where all human activities have ceased and given way to natural elements. Unlike the first two China-towns, the Ordynin one does not display temporal fluidity: it is a desolate and deserted town where snow and wind still dominate in March, while factories and shops are covered with rust. Here the "buttons" peep out from the foundries, and there is no trace of "bowler hats".⁶

One might interpret each of these "China-towns" as an allegory about Russia's identity. In the Moscow China-town there is a clear-cut opposition between day and night, which correspond respectively to Europe and Asia. The alternating identity of China-town in this daily setting mirrors the historical identity of Russia that has been vacillating between Europe and Asia. The transformation from China-town to "China" is an allegorical action that implies the process of becoming "Asian", of revealing the Asian facet of the Russian soul. The meaning of "China" in this episode is elucidated by the appearance of "China-town" in another novel of Pilnyak, *Machines and Wolves* (*Mashiny i volki*, published in 1925). In this montage-style work, which was completed four years after *Naked Year*, Pilnyak inserted his depiction of Moscow China-town from *Naked Year* into the final chapter. This self-citation contains several minor changes, including the following: "And then into this desert from the town houses and from under the gates crawled the real China-town (*podlinnyi Kitai-gorod*)".⁷ This adaptation confirms the idea that the author intends China-town to be a symbolic bearer of Russia's Asian heritage, which is concealed in daylight and only manifested at nightfall.

⁵ Ibid, 32. "В Нижнем-Новгороде, в Канавине, за Макарьем, где по Макарью величайшей задницей та же рассаживалась московская дневная Ильинка, в ноябре, после сентябрьских миллионов пудов, бочек, штук, аршин и четвертей товаров, смененных на рубли, франки, марки, стерлинги, доллары, лиры и прочие,— после октябрьского разгуля, под занавес разлившегося Волгой вин, икор, «Венеции», «европейских», «татарских», «персицких», «китайских» и литрами сперматозоидов,— в ноябре в Канавине, в снегу, из заколоченных рядов, из забитых палаток, из безлюдья — смотрит солдатскими пуговицами вместо глаз — тот: ночной московский и за Великой Каменной Стеной сокрытый: Китай. Безмолвие. Неразгадка. Без котелка. Солдатские пуговицы — вместо глаз." (Pilnyak, *Sobranie Sochinenii*, vol. 1, 55)

⁶ Pilnyak, *Sobranie Sochinenii*, vol. 1, 56.

⁷ Pilnyak, *Mashiny i volki* (Munich: W. Fink, 1925), 177. Italic mine.

Does Pilnyak offer his judgment or opinion on this Asian heritage, this inherent “China” in Russia’s ontogeny? In the depiction of Ordynin China–town, China seems to embody the stubborn and hostile natural force that immobilizes life and work, discourages human endeavors, and inhibits progress. In a word, it is connected to the notorious *kitaizm* that might have occurred to the author when he observed the backward and static condition of Russian provincial life: “from smoked workshops, from dead rusted cars, gazes – China, it grins, as soldiers’ coat buttons are able to grin”.⁸ This negative implication of China leads to a second opposition in the author’s rumination on the nature of Russia – that between the natural chaos embodied by the bleak rural landscape and the artificial order represented by the newly emerged factories and technologies. While the Ordynin China–town appears lifeless in the first China–town episode of *Naked Year*, it is brought to life again by the workers and engineers who resurrected the factory (*zavod – samovozrodivsja*). The same opposition between stasis and mobility, deterioration and construction is found in Pilnyak’s sketch of Moscow China–town in *Machines and Wolves*:

From March to May chilling water washed away everything man–made in China–town – and from May to March China–town was pulled down with the aspen stake – in the three fruitful months after summer there was work in the Moscow Il’inka day and night – everyone pulled as much as they could, with the most efforts, with the will and the craftiness of the whole nation; woods for fuels, signboards for roofs, glass for the clattering of stones, bricks for the stones and the stoves with no woods, for the repair of houses, and for the monuments of October Revolution; [...]⁹

If opposition is the guiding theme in the portrayal of China–town in both *Naked Year* and *Machines and Wolves*, there is also a glimpse of harmony and unity in it. In *Naked Year*, it is the Nizhniy Novgorod China–town that gathers together merchandise from Europe and Asia; while in *Machines and Wolves*, it is the Moscow China–town that witnesses the confluence of Persian, Tatar, Caucasian, Ural and Ukrainian traders who brought goods from every corner of Russia and transformed it into a commercial center reminiscent of the 19th century exchange market. These two market scenes evoke not Eurocentric but Eurasian sensations, and they become microcosms of transcontinental Russia. In Pilnyak’s terminology, “China” is born again in the “Eurasian market”, not the isolated and deserted “China” guarded by the Great Wall, but the revived “China” which opens its gates to all the Eurasian inhabitants. This new “China” no longer corresponds to the past of Russia but to its multi–ethnic and multi–cultural future, which is to be constructed by the Bolsheviks:

...and here another will has revived a new China – new people. [...] On the trains and steamers – thousands of poods, barrels, pieces, quarters, arshins of goods – were pulled out from the forests, the swamps, the factories, the mountains, from the Caspian Sea, the White Sea, the Chusovaya,

⁸ Pilnyak, *Sobranie Sochinenii*, vol. 1, 56. *Kitaizm* is an idea that employed China as the emblem of inertness, stagnation and spiritual barrenness in social development and national character. It gained currency in the Russian intellectual and academic discourses in the late 19th century through the writings of Dostoevsky, Herzen, Solovyov, etc.

⁹ Pilnyak, *Mashiny i volki*, 177. Translation mine. “с марта по май стужные воды размывали в Китае–городе содеянное – и с мая по март рушили Китай–город осиновым колом – московскую Ильинку без ночей в три плодоносных месяца за летом – рушили кто как мог, все всеми силами, волею народной и народным озорством; – дерево – на топливо, вывески – на крыши, стекла – на звон от камней, кирпичи – на камни, на печурки по бездровью, на ремонт домов, на памятник октябрьского восстания; [...]”

Pechora and Ob, from splinters, from kerosene lamps, from turbines, directly from the sun and from the Northern Lights – for the sake of sorrow and happiness, death and birth – so that one may live, as Rus' has lived for centuries – Persians, Tatars, Caucasians, Urals, Ukrainians in their thousands – with them the bowlers, the round glasses with frames, the smoking pipes – Asia and Europe together – Azevr – Eurasia opened with the all-Russian Gum.¹⁰

While “*Kitai*” in *Naked Year* refers to a mythical China which is ultimately directed at an encoded Russia, the Chinese elements in Pilnyak’s later works connect to China in reality and portray both its imperial history and republican present. In his story “Sankt-Piter-Burkh”, Pilnyak looks at both ancient and modern China, which he parallels with Petrine and modern Russia respectively. Lacking a complete plot line, “Sankt-Piter-Burkh” consists of snapshots taken from different historical stages of China and Russia, as well as fragmented portrayals of several characters belonging to different historical epochs and countries, including a Chinese Red Army man, a Russian Red Army man, a Russian engineer, a Russian White Army man, Peter the Great and the Kangxi Emperor. As its name suggests, “Sankt-Piter-Burkh” serves as an addition to the corpus of “Petersburg myth”, a literary tradition established and enriched by such 19th century masters as Pushkin, Gogol, Dostoevsky, etc. In both style and imagery it shows the heavy influence of Andrei Bely (1880–1934) and Dmitri Merezhkovsky (1865–1941), both of whom have contributed to the “Petersburg myth” itself.¹¹ What Pilnyak added to the tradition is that he extrapolated the “Petersburg myth” forward into the Soviet social context and associated it with the historical narrative of another nation. Such revision in turn shed new light on the “myth” itself. One thing that distinguishes “Sankt-Piter-Burkh” from Bely’s *Petersburg* is that the former, via its conception of parallel history, no longer concentrates on the “internalization of Asia” that arises from an obsession with Russia’s past identity, but lifts the “Petersburg problem” beyond the confines of Russian history onto the universal level, which suggests the possibility of a universalist stance inspired by anarchism.

“Sankt-Piter-Burkh” begins with a metaphor of time and history that becomes a recurring motif later in the story:

The centuries are stacked in sober layers like packs of cards. The packs of the centuries are encrusted with years, and the years are shuffled into ages – in Chinese cards. “No seller of idols bows down to the gods, for he knows what they are made of.” How, then, should the centuries bow down? Should they bow to the centuries? They know what has gone into their making: no wonder the fashions of years can be sorted out like suits of cards.

[...]

¹⁰Ibid. Translation mine. “...и вот иная воля возродила вновь Китай – иные люди. [...] На поездах, пароходами, – тысячи пудов, бочек, штук, четвертей, аршин – потянулись товары – из лесов, с болот, заводов, гор, с Каспия, Белого моря, с Чусовой. Печоры и Оби, – от лучин, от керосиновых лампочек, от турбинных, просто от солнца и от северного сияния – на горе и радость, на смерть и рождение, – чтобы жить, как жила Русь столетьем. – Персы, татары, кавказцы, уральцы, украинцы тысячи – с ними котелки, круглые очки в оправе, трубки, – Азия с Европой, – Азевр – Евразия открывался всероссийский Гум.”

¹¹Some scholarly writings on the Petersburg leitmotif in *The Tale* as well as on Bely and Merezhkovsky’s influence on Pilnyak include: Nirman Moraniak-Bamburian, “B. A. Pilnyak i ‘Peterburgskii tekst’,” in *B. A. Pilnyak. Issledovaniia i materialy, mezhvuzovskii sbornik naucznykh trudov 1*, ed. Aleksandr Auer (Kolomna: Izd-vo KGPI. 2001), 36-46; M. I. Liubomova, “O Peterburgskikh povestiakh Borisa Pilnyaka,” in *Boris Pilnyak, Opyt sevodniashnevo prochteniia* (Moscow: Nasledie, 1995), 55-62.

The centuries are stacked in sober layers like packs of cards. What fortuneteller from Kolomna in St. Petersburg can throw down the cards so that history will repeat itself, so that the years will repeat the cards of the centuries and come up exactly the same a second time?¹²

Inside this metaphor is a Nietzschean idea: History is eternal recurrence. It renews itself by changing the sequence and the combination of preexisting elements, emblemized by the “Chinese cards” which are reshuffled into new orders by chance. Neither the essence nor the mechanism of history changes: history is not the reflection of some preordained plan, but that of arbitrary improvisation. In other words, it is not governed by the will of the Gods, which are actually “idols” created by man and for man. Neither is it defined by the will of individual human beings, for the process of human activity itself is dominated by chance. Such non-teleological view of history is not only a rebuttal to the ideal of cosmopolitan progress, which lies at the center of the positivist moral, but also a contradiction to the eschatological or Messianic belief shared by many Silver Age thinkers, for it renders the proposal of such question as “the destiny of Russia” or “the predestined mission of Russia” invalid.

In Pilnyak’s eyes, history repeats itself many times. In “Sankt-Piter-Burkh”, Peter’s Russia is seen as a repetition of Qin Shi Huang’s China, while the history of China itself is presented as a series of repetitions. The author mentions several historical scenes of Imperial China, each corresponding to the history of Russia in its own way. Let us examine these episodes according to their chronology. First comes Qin Shi Huang, China’s first emperor and the creator of the Qin dynasty (221–207 BC), who Pilnyak compares to Peter the Great. In his description, Qin Shi Huang “cut off the Middle Kingdom from the world by means of the Great Wall of China”, and “abolished all ranks and insignia”.¹³ These deeds would make him the direct opposite of Peter the Great, who cut a way into Europe for Russia and introduced the Table of Ranks to Russian socio-political life. However, Pilnyak emphasizes the similarity of these two figures: both have gathered absolute power over the nation and transformed the mode of life in their countries by taking arbitrary actions. Qin Shi Huang’s despotism delivered “a death blow to feudalism”¹⁴, while Peter’s autocracy marked the inception of Russia’s Europeanization. Pilnyak implies that both Peter’s personality and his rule reflect the heritage of absolutism and tyranny carried in his blood. As he writes, Peter remained an emperor only because he “did not live long enough to become a Great Khan”.¹⁵

¹²Boris Pilnyak, *The Tale of the Unextinguished Moon and Other Stories*, trans. Beatrice Scott (New York: Washington Square Press, 1967), 99-100. “Столетия ложатся степенно колодами. Столетний колоды годы инкрустируют, чтоб тасовать годы векам — китайскими картами. — «Ни один продавец идолов не поклоняется богам, он знает, из чего они сделаны.» — Как же столетьям склоняться — перед столетьями? — они знают, из чего они слиты: не даром по мастям подбираются стили лет... [...] Столетия ложатся степенно, — колодами; — какая гадалка с Коломны в Санкт-Питер-Бурге китаец картами так, что история повторяется, — что столетий колоды — годы повторяют раз, и два?!” (Boris Pilnyak, *Sankt-Piter-Burkh* (Letchworth: Prideaux Press, 1979), 5.)

¹³Pilnyak, *The Tale of the Unextinguished Moon: And Other Stories*, 100. Qin Shi Huang decreed numerous social and administrative reforms, including the abolishment of feudal lords inside the imperial territory, but he did not eliminate the entire aristocratic system. Qin Shi Huang also ordained the construction of the Great Wall to defend his empire from nomadic enemies.

¹⁴Ibid. Feudal kings were the *de facto* rulers of the various feudal states on the Chinese Plain during the Warring States period (475–221 BC). The title was annihilated under Qin Shi Huang’s rule, thus transitioning China from the era of feudal states to that of empire with a centralized power.

¹⁵Ibid.

The second episode mentioned in “Sankt–Piter–Burkh” concerns the Yongle Emperor of the Ming dynasty (1368–1644):

Yung Lo, the third emperor of the Ta Ming dynasty, passed here on his way to make war against the Mongolians, supporters of the Yuan dynasty and exiled from China by his father, Hung Wu”: this is engraved upon blocks of white marble [...]¹⁶

The inscription on the marble plaque, which stands near the fortress–town of Dushikou beneath the Great Wall, refers to one of the five military campaigns led by Zhu Di (Yongle Emperor), the third Emperor of the Ming dynasty, against the Mongols between 1413 and 1424. The Mongol rulers of China during the Yuan dynasty (1271–1368) were defeated by Zhu Yuanzhang (Hongwu Emperor), the first emperor of Ming and Zhu Di’s father. Still, both the eastern and western Mongolian tribes constituted threats to the social and political stability on the Northern border of China. Zhu Di’s campaigns, which were intended to extirpate the Mongolian peril, partly coincided with Muscovy’s resistance against the Tatar yoke, which persisted until 1480. Pilnyak draws attention to this specific episode to place China in a historical context that unites it with Russia in their relationship with the Mongols. This is of particular interest if one considers the frequent conflation of “China” and “Mongolia” that took root in Vladimir Solovyov’s (1853–1900) proposal of Panmongolism and the “Chinese peril”, which had since circulated among Russian cultural elites in their imagination of the “yellow threat” and their conception of the Asian inheritance in Russian blood.¹⁷ Pilnyak’s close examination of history compels the readers to realize that the “East” is indeed a mental construction and obsession that does not possess semantic coherence within itself. Acknowledging this, the reader is prompted to consider the historical life of Russia and China from a new perspective.

The third historical episode in “Sankt–Piter–Burkh” is also associated with the defense of the Chinese Empire against the Mongolian invasion:

And the Emperor K’ang–his passed there likewise on the thirteenth day of the second moon, in sixteen hundred and ninety–six, according to European chronology, to destroy men and horses by famine in Shamo. Shamo means the same as Gobi. Shamo is a Gobi, a desert.¹⁸

¹⁶Pilnyak, *The Tale of the Unextinguished Moon: And Other Stories*, 99. “Третий император династии Да–Мин, Юн–Ло, прошел здесь, отправляясь на войну с монголами приверженцами династии Юан, изгнанными из Китая его отцом Хун–Ву, – она высечена на глыбах белого мрамора [...]” (Pilnyak, *Sankt–Piter–Burkh*, 5)

¹⁷“The yellow threat” or “the yellow peril” is a notion widely circulating in the cultural and political discourse across Europe from the mid–19th century to the early 20th century, finding its origin in the intellectuals’ and politicians’ anxiety over Japan’s modernizing program after the Meiji Reformation (1868) and the massive immigration waves of Chinese workers to Europe and America. On the one hand, the “yellow threat” as an ideological construct was inextricably tied to the political network constituted by major powers of the world since the 1870s. On the other hand, the image of the “hordes from the East” also arose from the irrational and psychotic anxiety associated with the historical reference to the invasion of Europe by Attila the Hun in the sixth century, and to Golden Horde period in Russia (13–15th centuries). The notion of Panmongolism, for instance, was invoked in Solovyov’s writings in response to the rise of Japan in the 1890s. For a study of the history of “yellow peril”, see Sabine Doran, *The Culture of Yellow or the Visual Politics of Late Modernity* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2013), 121–157.

¹⁸Pilnyak, *The Tale of the Unextinguished Moon: And Other Stories*, 99. “И там же в тринадцатый день второй луны, в тысяча шестьсот девяносто шестом году, по европейскому летосчислению, прошел Император Конси, чтоб уморить голодом в Шамо и лошадей и солдат. Шамо значит тоже что Гоби: Шамо – есть Гоби, пустыня.” (Pilnyak, *Sankt–Piter–Burkh*, 5)

These sentences refer to the campaign of the Kangxi Emperor of the Qing dynasty (1644–1912) against the Dzungar Khanate. Kangxi, a contemporary of Peter the Great, orchestrated the Battle of Jao Modo, a decisive battle leading to the defeat of the Dzungars that was fought in May 1696 near the town of Dushikou, where Zhu Di passed in his anti-Mongolian campaign in 1424. What links all three episodes together is that they are reflections of the effect of individual power and decisions on the process of history. While Qin Shi Huang's autocracy totally transformed the social and cultural structure of ancient China, the military feats of Yongle and Kangxi exerted great influence on the geopolitical status on the northern border of China. Pilnyak structures his story in such a way as to make Peter the Great parallel to these Chinese emperors. Just as Qin Shi Huang is the first ruler of the Qin dynasty and the first emperor on the Chinese plain, Peter the Great is referred to as "the first Peter of the Romanov dynasty and the first emperor of the Russian Plain".¹⁹ In Pilnyak's portrait, Peter, like Qin Shi Huang, was obsessed with his power and driven to insanity by it. Like the Chinese emperors, he strived to organize his territory according to his own will, the result of which is the birth of Petersburg, a product of one man's whim, an illusion that presents itself as the abstraction of rectilinear streets by day and as the freezing mist by night. Such a conception of Petersburg, by the way, clearly shows the influence of Bely. Like Bely, Pilnyak sees Petersburg as a foreign encrustation on the Russian land, forced upon it by Peter:

It is left for St. Petersburg to leap from the *rectilinear* street into the mists of metaphysics, the fumes rising from the marsh. That same Finnish day promised to remain till night and with a misty night to destroy the straight lines of the street, to cloud with mist.²⁰

In "Sankt-Piter-Burkh", Peter's Petersburg is juxtaposed with the Petersburg of the revolutionary era. Moments from history and those from the present are interwoven together with no natural transitions in between. In the Petersburg of the present one observes a character named Ivan Ivanovich Ivanov, who is a Bolshevik and a professor. One learns that Ivan was tortured by his conscience for having sent his brother, Petr, to be executed. Petr Ivanovich Ivanov, a White Army officer, did not perish but became an émigré in Beijing. Ivan lies at the center of the Petersburg myth reconstructed in "Sankt-Piter-Burkh", connecting the past with the present. On the one hand, he bears resemblance to Peter the Great by repeating his sin: as Peter the Great sent his own son to inquisition, which indirectly caused his death, Ivan persecuted and expelled his own brother. Being an intelligentsia also indicates his link to Peter the Great, for Pilnyak deems Peter as the first "intelligentsia" in Russia.²¹ Living in the darkness, like a "cockroach in the crevice"²², Ivan deteriorates alone and slowly, like the city he

¹⁹Pilnyak, *Sankt-Piter-Burkh*, 6. Translation mine. "Первый Петр в династии Романовых и первый император Российской Равнины".

²⁰Pilnyak, *The Tale of the Unextinguished Moon: And Other Stories*, 107. "Питербургу остаться сорваться с прямолинейной — проспекта — в туман метафизик, в болотную гарь. Тот же финляндский денек обещал быть к ночи — туманною ночью, уничтожить прямолинейность проспектов, затуманить туманом." (Pilnyak, *Sankt-Piter-Burkh*, 13)

²¹In his essay "Zakaz Nash", Pilnyak writes: "Peter tore Russia away from Russia. Peter hung himself by the tail onto Europe — Razumnik Vasil'ich Ivanov was wrong in tracing the genealogy of Russian intelligentsia to Radishchev — Peter was an *intelligent*." ("Петр оторвал Россию от России. Петр повесил себя за хвост на Европу — Разумник Васильич Иванов был неправ, начав род русской интеллигенции с Радищева, — Петр первым был интеллигентом.") See Boris Pilnyak, *Stat'i 1922-1929* (Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel', 1991): 254.

²²Pilnyak, *Sankt-Piter-Burkh*, 16.

dwells in. It is said that he is “afraid of space”²³, which brings him close to the same self-isolating Apollon Ableukhov in Bely’s *Petersburg*. In a word, Ivan suffers from “Peter’s fever” or “St. Petersburgism” (*Petrovshchina, Likhoradka, Sankt-piterburgovshchina*)²⁴, a foreign disease, as the title of the story suggests, that has isolated generations of Russian intelligentsia from the rest of the nation and split their self-identity.

It turns out, then, that despite being a revolutionary, Ivan could not understand the true meaning of the revolution, which is viewed by Pilnyak as a “rebellion of the folk” ignited in the spirit of Pugachev and Razin. The essence of the Russian revolution as understood by Pilnyak is summarized by the following words of the engineer Andrei Liudogovsky, a friend of Ivan:

I assert that a deeply national well-being, a vital movement from the depth exists in Russia, and that this has nothing whatever in common with European syndicalism. In Russia an anarchistic revolt exists in the name of no-government, against every kind of government. I assert that Russia must experience and is experiencing a fever of *Peterism*, of Petersburgism, a fever of ideas, theories, mathematical catholicism. I assert Bolshevism and Stenka Razinism, and renounce communism.²⁵

If the motivation behind the “anarchist revolt” is the will of the nation, then the new Russia to be born from it should be perceived as the exact opposite of Petersburg, the creation of a single man’s will. It is here that the roads of China and Russia cross again, for China had been swept by revolution when the story was written, and the Qing dynasty, the last dynasty of the Chinese Empire, had approached its end. The “idols”, which have been mistakenly taken as “Gods” by the common folk, were abdicating from the histories of Russia and China around the same time.

In the engineer’s eyes, the promise of revolution – understood by him as a spontaneous upwelling of the national energy – should justify all the miseries currently born by the Russian nation, as he reveals in his response to Ivan’s agony:

“Remember, Andrey? We played bone marbles. But my own brother, I sent my own brother to be shot, dear Andrey!”

“Peter’s fever, St. Petersburgism? The Bolsheviks will bite one’s head right off. So what? There is no Bolshevik, there is no Russia. Savages! There is only...the world!”²⁶

²³Ibid.

²⁴Ibid., p. 18.

²⁵Pilnyak, *The Tale of the Unextinguished Moon: And Other Stories*, 110. “Я утверждаю, что в России с низов глубоко — национальное здоровье, необходимое движение, ничего общего не имеющее с европейским синдикалистическим. В России анархический бунт во имя бесгосударственности, против всякого государства. Я утверждаю, что Россия должна была — и изживает лихорадку петровщины, петербурговщины, лихорадку идеи, теории, математического католицизма. Я утверждаю большевизм, разиновщину, и отрицаю коммунизм.” (Pilnyak, *Sankt-Piter-Burkh*, 17)

²⁶Pilnyak, *The Tale of the Unextinguished Moon: And Other Stories*, 111. “Помнишь, Андрей, мы играли в бабки. Но я своего брата послал расстрелять, милый Андрей!” — ‘Петровщина Лихорадка, Санкт-петербурговщина? Большевик голову откусит, возьмет в рот и так: хак?! — Нет большевика, нет никакой России, — дикари! Есть — мир!’” (Pilnyak, *Sankt-Piter-Burkh*, 18)

As Russian sectarians have foretold, the blizzard of revolution should “strip the husk from all dead things – death to the half-alive” all “along the Russo–European plain”.²⁷ The movement would render Russia the center of Eurasia, uniting all the vital national forces on the continent, like the center of the pentagon in *The Naked Year*. Russia would become, in Pilnyak’s terminology, the second Middle Kingdom (*vtoraia Imperiia Srediny*)²⁸, as China was the first Middle Kingdom.²⁹ The role of Russia as the gathering ground of international revolutionaries–anarchists is indicated by the journey of Li Yan, a Chinese insurgent, to Russia. It is told that Li Yan was born in a peasant’s family near the town of Dushikou, and that his father joined the Boxer Rebellion against the foreign invasion when he was a child, and later died in a village skirmish after the Xinhai Revolution broke out. Li Yan soon left home and travelled first to Beijing and then through Vladivostok to Russia. He appears there in a prison, perhaps incarcerated by the Russian Provisional Government as a Bolshevik. In the prison Li Yan sings the war song that he heard as a child when his father chanted with other members of the Society of the Righteous and Harmonious, the organization that led the Boxer Rebellion. This scene completes Li Yan’s self-identification by connecting his current identity as a Bolshevik to his childhood memory among the peasant rebels. The placement of the Chinese revolution in the context of peasant uprisings conforms to Pilnyak’s perception of the Russian revolution. In his parallel reconstruction of the history of two nations, the Chinese and Russian anti-imperialist revolts are rooted in their respective traditions of national resistance against foreign influence, ideas, and practices.

If the Russian revolution is defined as a willful expression of suppressed national vitality and creativity, then it should combat everything alien in the national life, including the identification with Europe, to which the intelligentsia grew accustomed. Such a mentality needs to be stripped off the Russian soul by the revolution as a cleansing movement, as the blizzard has torn away the encrustations over the Russian soil in *Naked Year*. In “The Big Heart”, a story published in 1926, Pilnyak celebrates the spirit of national resistance in the defiance of European capitalists by indigenous Mongolians. “The Big Heart” demonstrates Pilnyak’s effort to adopt the voice of a Bolshevik who advocates the welfare of the over-exploited proletarians in the third world and consciously distances himself from the Europeanized and capitalist mindset.

“The Big Heart” tells the story of three English entrepreneurs who intend to negotiate with a Mongolian chieftain for the expansion of their bean–oil business in China and end up instead humiliated by the Mongolian tribe, who plotted against them together with their Mongolian interpreter. From the very beginning of the novel, Pilnyak strives to de-stereotype the Eurocentric vision of China by adopting a narrative perspective that distances him from the “European eyes” and the “European ear”:

²⁷Pilnyak, *The Tale of the Unextinguished Moon: And Other Stories*, 106.

²⁸Pilnyak, *Sankt-Piter-Burkh*, 7.

²⁹Pilnyak’s imagination of the “second Middle Kingdom” here contrasts with his vision of “Moscow the third Rome”, revealed in his story “The Third Capital” (“Tret’ia stolitsa”, written in 1922). In the light of this, the writer’s choice of paradigm in “Sankt–Piter–Burkh” enables him not only to pronounce his Eurasianist ideal, but also to dismiss any association with the Judeo–Christian tradition.

To Europeans all Chinese have the same face. In their government concessions, Europeans check their lists with a dash when one Chinaman has earned about a hundred *dayans* and goes off home to Chefv after selling his job to his brother or a friend for two *dayans*, along with his passport. And so non-European eyes and non-European ears would be needed to catch this brief exchange by the factory fence:

“Are you a Mongol?”

“No, I’m Chinese. I want to be with Russia. How about you? Are you a Mongol?”

“Yes, I am. A Mongol *boy* from Shin-Barga is going on your train. We both came from Shin-Barga, from Kwot-ulang. Let me take your place.”³⁰

The “non-European ear” allows the narrator to record this conversation between a Chinese worker and a Mongol who wants to buy his work. However, he is also able to borrow “European eyes” so as to expose a stereotyped picture of China with an ironic overtone. Immediately below the quoted conversation, the narrator describes the town where the bean-oil factory is located with an exotic touch that combines beauty and filth, attraction and disgust, fascination and fear, all of which are condensed in the image of the Chinese woman’s feet “warped by the shoe of beauty”.³¹ The town itself is compared to “an anthill” (*muraveinik*)³², an image already associated with *kitaizm* by Dostoevsky in his prose piece “Baal”, which denotes a society that is organized by its common worship of materialism. What Pilnyak intends here is to contrast the entrenched impression of China as a mixture of exotic *chinoiserie* and primitive *kitaizm* with a realistic and objective portrait of the town’s factory workers, men, women and children, who are struggling to make a living in inhuman working conditions:

Old women or young girls, naked save for loin cloths, stood inside the drums in the milling department, where the beans were crushed into grits. They revolved along with the drums inside them sweeping up the waste and sorting the beans. The women who do this work, old women and young girls alike, change every three months, since people die after three months of such labor.³³

The details of life in the bean-oil factory do not concern the “European eyes”, which Pilnyak continues to explore with the description of three English gentlemen who are cooperating on the business expansion project. Each of these gentlemen represents a stereotyped character and opinion that is associated with capitalist or colonialist thinking. Mr. Grey is the archetypical capitalist preoccupied with the maximization of his profit and possessions. He understands and respects only the “theory of finance capital,” and believes it to be the key to human

³⁰Pilnyak, *The Tale of the Unextinguished Moon: And Other Stories*, 193. “На глаз европейца все китайцы однолицы; на концессиях европейцы считают бичом, когда один китаец наработает даян сто и уходит к себе в Чифу, продав место брату или соседу за два даяна, вместе с паспортом. Поэтому надо было иметь не-европейский глаз и не-европейское ухо, чтобы услышать у заводского забора короткий разговор. ‘Ты — монгол?’ ‘— Нет, я китаец. Я хочу быть с Россией. А ты — монгол?’ ‘Да, я монгол. У вас в поезде едет монгол-бой, из Шин-Барги. Мы оба из Шин-Барги, из Кувот-улана. Я поеду вместо тебя.’” (Pilnyak, *Sobranie Sochinenii*, vol. 6, 167)

³¹Pilnyak, *The Tale of the Unextinguished Moon: And Other Stories*, 193-194.

³²Ibid., 194.

³³Ibid., 195. “В дробильном отделении, где дробятся бобы в крупу, в барабанах стоят женщины, или старухи, или подростки, голые, с тряпками на чреслах. Они вертятся вместе с барабаном, посредине барабана, подметая сор и сортируя бобы: на этой работе женщины, — старухи или подростки, безразлично, — меняются каждые три месяца, ибо через три месяца такой работы люди умирают.” (Pilnyak, *Sobranie Sochinenii*, vol. 6, 169)

progress. In his eyes the Chinese workers in his factory are merely instruments and numbers that require bookkeeping, while the Mongolian tribe is a group of savages to be conquered. In contrast, Mr. Smith stands for the Romantic European adventurer who is ever ready to explore foreign lands, to be intoxicated with “a storm at sea”, with a passion “for some little Japanese girl” or with “the music of Chinese drums”.³⁴ The third gentleman, a “philosopher in khaki”, is an embodiment of philistine epicurean, devoted to the pursuit of material abundance and pleasure and uninterested in any efforts involved with mental activities:

The third man, the philosopher in khaki, rose clumsily from his easy chair, pushing his glasses onto his forehead, and it was plain how painstakingly this khaki had been crumpled during its span of existence by sitting around in every kind of chair.

[...]

The philosopher in khaki came back from his visit to the lavatory.

“Don’t you think, gentlemen, that you’re talking just for the sake of talking, when we have more practical work on hand? For example, it’s time for a drink, and after a whiskey we’ve got to tackle the thoroughly boring task of calculating the freight rates for the northern and southern branch lines [...]”³⁵

Pilnyak conveys his repugnance at colonialism and imperialism in the Mongolian tribe’s repudiation of the Englishmen’s attempt to bribe them for the convenience of their business. Mr. Smith, who was eager to enjoy the visit to which they were invited by the chieftain, was instead disturbed and disgusted by the impaled head hung on the fortress gate and the food that contains rotten eggs. The visit ends hurriedly with an unexpected intimidation: The horse, which was presented as a gift by the chieftain for the Englishmen, was shot right in front of Mr. Grey holding its reins. The Englishmen rushed into the train and escaped in full speed. In Pilnyak’s depiction, the steppe is “a desert to the European”, but “the native land to the Mongol”, who alone feel the scorching sun as the benevolent “big heart”.³⁶ The successful defense of their steppe from capitalist encroachment summarizes the anti-colonialist and anti-Eurocentric argument of the author.

Both “Sankt–Piter–Burkh” and “The Big Heart” seem to have prepared the way to his journey to China in 1926, which became the subject of his semi-fictionalized travelogue *The Chinese Diary*, which was published in Feb 1927 (also published as *The Chinese Story, Kitaiskaja povest’* in 1928). *The Chinese Diary* recorded Pilnyak’s impression of several Chinese cities including Shanghai, Beijing, Hankou and Wuchang, interlaced with his fictional description of the activities of Chinese revolutionaries and the life of foreigners in the concessions, as well as the story of his Russian fellow-traveler Krylov.

³⁴Pilnyak, *The Tale of the Unextinguished Moon: And Other Stories*, 200.

³⁵Ibid., 200-201. “Третий, философ в хаки, вылезает из своего кресла, очки он ссовывает на лоб, — и видно, как его хаки старательно измято креслами и стульями, на которых он пересидел за век своего хаки. [...] Третий, философ в хаки, возвращается из уборной. ‘— Вам не кажется, джентльмены, — говорит он — что вы разговариваете только для того, чтобы разговаривать, хотя у нас есть работы более существенные. Например, надо выпить сода–виски и после виски приступить к совершенно скучному подсчету тарифов с северных и южных веток [...]’” (Pilnyak, *Sobranie Sochinenii*, vol. 6, 175-176)

³⁶Pilnyak, *The Tale of the Unextinguished Moon: And Other Stories*, 218-220.

Pilnyak arrived in China at a time of great social turmoil, when the warlords, the Nationalist government and foreign imperial forces were striving for political power and business profits, while the Communist party was preparing to counterattack the Nationalist party that initially cooperated with the former but later started to undertake a purge of Communist members. From the beginning of the travelogue, the author depicted repeatedly the shocking contrast between the excruciatingly poor living condition of the masses – both the city workers and the village residents – and the situation in the city concessions, where foreigners enjoyed their “incorporeal, unimpeded, inviolable” privileges.³⁷ To give the readers some understanding of this contrast, he quoted a paragraph from a local newspaper in Shanghai that told how foreigners found it intolerable and infuriating that the concession administration chose to allow Chinese people to enter the local parks, which not long ago were designated as “inaccessible to dogs and Chinese”.³⁸ He also records the daily trials that a Chinese rickshaw man, who serves Englishmen in Hankou, must go through:

An Englishman in cork helmet, dazzling white suit, and white shoes sits in his rickshaw encouraging the rickshaw man with a white hose in the back. The rickshaw man opens up a way through the mass of humanity with hoarse shouts. This is how it is: in Peking, in Wu-ch'ang, as in Hankow, Sikhs – Indians in crimson turbans who are Britain's colonial police – stand at intersections. They hold bamboo sticks with which they paste the thighs of each and every Chinese coolie or rickshaw man that runs past. This is how it is in all British or “international” concessions. Nowhere else will you see so much stick swinging and beating as in China!³⁹

Pilnyak never restrains from satirizing the order, the comfort, and the “civilized modernity” of the expatriates’ life in Chinese concessions. He also makes fun of the “humanitarian concerns” and “moral superiority” of European and American residents. For instance, he tells the story of how an American, in order to separate two Chinese fighting on the street, “for the sake of order” and “on a ‘humanitarian impulse’”⁴⁰ struck and kicked one of them almost to death before leaving with two other foreigners in their automobile. In this scene Pilnyak also shows the apathy of Chinese people who have accustomed themselves to endless fighting, squabbling and suffering and have ridded themselves of human sensibility and dignity:

It seemed to me that the American had killed the Chinese [...] But the Chinese got up, and then the American once more – with a sigh of relief – kicked him in the back. The Chinese ran away from the American like a beaten dog. About two hundred spectators stood about...⁴¹

³⁷Boris Pilnyak, *Chinese Stories and Other Tales*, trans. Vera Reck and Michael Green (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988), 24.

³⁸*Ibid.*, 28.

³⁹*Ibid.*, 27. “Англичанин в пробковом шлеме, в белоснежном костюме, в белых туфлях – сидит в рикше, подгоняет ломпацо белой своей туфлей в спину, – ломпацо расталкивает человеческую толпу охриплым криком: это и в Пекине, и в Ханькоу, и в Учане – на перекрестках стоят «сикхи» – индусы в малиновых чалмах – английская колониальная полиция, – у сикхов в руках бамбуковые палки – и каждого, каждого китайца, пробегающего мимо, кули или ломпацо, бьют сикхи этими бамбуками по ляжкам: это везде, где есть английские или «международные» концессии. – Нигде нет столько полиции, как в Китае, – и нигде так много не бьют и не дерутся, как в Китае!” (Pilnyak, *Sobranie Sochinenii*, vol. 7, 188)

⁴⁰Pilnyak, *Chinese Stories and Other Tales*, 83.

⁴¹*Ibid.* “Мне показалось, что американец убил китайца. [...] Но китаец поднялся, – тогда американец еще раз ударил – облегчено вздохнув – ногою по спине. Китаец побежал от американца – так, как бегают битые собаки. Кругом стояло человек двести зрителей –” (Pilnyak, *Sobranie Sochinenii*, vol. 7, 251)

Pilnyak sees the only light amidst this darkness in the individual rebels who rose against all: against the warlords, the colonizers, the municipal police, the entrepreneurs, the compradors, “those for whose freedom America fights”, in a word, the “unreasonable reality”. He tells the story of one such individual, Liu Hua, who was born as a peasant’s child and became one of the leaders of the May Thirteenth Movement of 1925 in Shanghai. Pilnyak’s story is a combination of journalistic report and fictional writing, with the addition of many imaginary details. Most curiously, this story is woven together with the fictional story of Miss Brighton, an American woman who was a member of the Siccawei missionary group and was travelling from San Francisco to China to work “with the aim of educating the savage Chinese in the light of Christianity”.⁴² The girl’s path in China crossed with that of Liu Hua once, when she borrowed books from him who was working as a librarian. However, as Liu Hua was organizing the workers’ union and dodging the persecution from the policemen, Miss Brighton was having an exotic city trip with her American acquaintance in Beijing. When he was executed, she was marrying the secretary of the British consulate, the man representing Britain in the city court that “naturally applied its hand to the case of Liu Hua”, without any knowledge of that she was “loved by a half-naked librarian who could not follow her into Jestfield Park” for “Dogs and Chinese Not Allowed”.⁴³

As with the “English gentlemen” in “The Big Heart”, Pilnyak is aware that he is creating a stereotypical image of a Westerner with a stereotypical vision of the East. Like the gentlemen in “The Big Heart”, Miss Brighton possesses no psychological depth or dispositional complexity. Instead, she is outlined as, in the author’s own words, an individual who was “subjectively... right in every way”, but certainly not so objectively.⁴⁴ By creating Miss Brighton, Pilnyak does not wish to lampoon the hypocrisy in the Westerner’s “enlightening cause”, but desires to show the enormous gap between benign intention and effective action as well as the tremendous difficulties of empathy and involvement for an outsider who is not ready to confront and to be contradicted by the unpredictable reality. As the author reveals:

...later everything was to be just as she had imagined it on the way over, as she had constructed it from the letters of a friend and from photographs – because her life was built on traditions, on the stern tolling of regulations; Americans and Englishmen have no idea of the meaning of the word “abroad,” living as Americans even in China and knowing their future three years in advance – to the week – and without mistakes!⁴⁵

While the contrast between East and West inside China receives ample attention from the author, another topic has also left its trace in many places in the travelogue: the comparison between Russia and China. On the one hand, the author often conveys the incomprehensibil-

⁴²Pilnyak, *Chinese Stories and Other Tales*, 60. The Siccawei missionary group was a Jesuit society based on the present-day Xu Jiahui District of Shanghai.

⁴³Ibid., 73-74.

⁴⁴Ibid., 61.

⁴⁵Ibid. “...все впоследствии так и было, как представляла она себе в пути, как создала она по письмам подруги и по фотографиям, – потому что жизнь ее построена была традициями, строгими курантами регламентов, когда американцы и англичане не имеют понятия «заграница», проживая даже в Китае по-американски, – и когда они могут – за три года вперед с точностью до недели знать свое будущее – и не ошибаться!” (Pilnyak, *Sobranie Sochinenii*, vol. 7, 226)

ity of China with respect to its food, its smell, its nature, etc. On the other hand, he feels that from all the countries he has visited, “China resembles Russia the most”.⁴⁶ He admits that he kept “stumbling upon Russia” in China and asserts that “it is no accident that both China and Russia were conquered by the Mongols”.⁴⁷ In one place, the author describes how Beijing resembles Moscow of 1918: Soldiers crowd all the palaces and temples, “cannon stands, patrols guard intersections”, and husks of watermelon seeds are all over the ground.⁴⁸ In another paragraph, he records how a morning in Hankou aroused the sensations of his childhood in Saratov:

...I awoke today with the most astonishing sensation of childhood, my childhood in Saratov, in the house of my grandmother Katerina Ivanovna, among the noises of the embankment, the boom of the barge hauler’s song. I don’t know whether they borrowed this harbor song from us or we from them, but I know that the tune and the rhythm of it here in Hankow, as everywhere else in China, are the same as in Saratov and everywhere on the Volga. [...] And in the morning, freed from the nightmare of sleep under a mosquito net, I went to the embankment to wander through my childhood, for the picture is exactly the same, amazingly so: the same barge haulers wearing a variety of national costumes, the same overseers, men carrying sacks and bales on their backs in the same way [...].⁴⁹

In a paragraph of abstract reflection, Pilnyak attempts to explain the affinity between Russia and China by the correspondence of their modern development. In both Russia and China, he argues, there now exists a confrontation between the masses and the intelligentsia. The tradition of life, replete with rituals that contributed to its solemnity, has been well preserved in the Russian and the Chinese peasantry respectively. While the intelligentsia is a faceless phenomenon in both nations: They have all their ideas borrowed from the “European culture” that “destroys a national mode of life, removing its distinctive qualities, as too inane and stationary”.⁵⁰ However, it is such destruction, which has weakened the “pillars” of national cultures, that has made possible the growth of a “new, world culture” represented by such heroic figures as Liu Hua.⁵¹ The “world culture” – the culture of mass rebellion, of the struggle for human justice and well-being – has already taken root in Russia, and is now shooting new sprouts in China. Both countries would be the construction sites for a “supernational culture”, a culture that cultivates a new form of social organization that is founded on a new relationship between human beings.⁵²

⁴⁶Pilnyak, *Chinese Stories and Other Tales*, 40.

⁴⁷Ibid., 40–41.

⁴⁸Ibid., 24.

⁴⁹Ibid., 22–23. “...Я проснулся сегодня в удивительнейшем чувстве детства, моего детства в Саратове, в доме бабки Катерины Ивановны, в шуме набережной, в гуле дубинушки. Не знаю, кто у кого взял дубинушку, эту портовую дубинушку, – но знаю, что мотив и ритм ее здесь в Ханькоу, как везде в Китае, таков же, как в Саратове, как везде на Волге. [...] И утром, освободившись от кошмара сна в москитнике, я пошел на набережную – бродить по моему детству, ибо картина одна и та же, разительно, – такие же разноплеменно одетые бурлаки, такие же надсмотрщики, так же на спинах (непонятно, почему не ломаются хребты) тащат люди мешки и тюки.” (Pilnyak, *Sobranie Sochinenii*, vol. 7, 183)

⁵⁰Pilnyak, *Chinese Stories and Other Tales*, 58.

⁵¹Ibid., 59.

⁵²Ibid.

This comparison of Russia and China's modern histories that stresses their common dialectical nature summarizes Pilnyak's observation of China. From the "China-town" in *The Naked Year* to China in turbulence in *The Chinese Diary*, his conception of China evolved from a mythologized locus that embodied Russia's Asiatic character and the Eurasianist ideal to a center of conflicts where the drama of colonialist ambitions and national aspirations was being staged. The China he illustrates is set against a variety of historical backgrounds, changing from the semi-fictional "Heavenly Empire" that mirrors Russia's history to the country in crisis that recalls Russia's recent past. The latter folio of Pilnyak's portrayal of China represented the general shift of attention and change of perception among writers with regards to China in the 1920s. For writers such as Sergei Tret'iakov (1892–1937), Vsevolod Ivanov (1895–1963) and Nikolai Kostarev (1893–1939), "China" no longer epitomized a system of values, beliefs and life modes that constitutes the alterity for both Europe and post-Petrine Russia. Rather, it started to be represented as a society that was following the footprints of the Soviet Union to become an "echo" of Soviet Russia.⁵³ The change of literary interpretation corresponded with the ideological shift and socio-political transition in the Soviet Union of the 1920s. By introducing the China that was rebelling against its own tradition, Russian writers like Pilnyak not only updated the image of China for Russian readers, but also examined China as a testing ground for socio-political transformation that would help to shed light upon the global values and effects of Soviet ideology.

⁵³Several studies that dedicated themselves to the images of China in early Soviet literature have emerged in recent years. For a cultural-political analysis of the images of China in Soviet literature of the 1920s and 1930s, see Edward Tyerman, "The Search for an Internationalist Aesthetics: Soviet Images of China, 1920–1935" (PhD diss., Columbia University, 2014). For a survey of the trans-national influence of Sergei Tret'iakov's theatrical representation of China in his play "Roar, China!" ("Rychi, Kitai!", 1926), see Mark Gamsa, "Sergei Tret'iakov's Roar, China! between Moscow and China," *Itinerario* 36, no. 2 (2012): 91-108. For a focused study of the image of Chinese Red partisan in Vsevolod Ivanov's novel *Armoured Train 14–69* (*Bronepoezd No. 14–69*, 1922), see Roy Chan, "Broken Tongues: Race, Sacrifice, and Geopolitics in the Far East in Vsevolod Ivanov's *Bronepoezd No. 14–69*," *Sibirica* 10, no. 3 (2011): 29-54.

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KEYWORDS

Sankt-Piter-Burkh

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ABSTRACT:

This paper discusses the imagination and description of China in the works of Boris Pilnyak. It proposes that Pilnyak's fictions and travelogues demonstrate two approaches to the literary representation of China: the imaginary and the documentary. What unifies these two approaches is the underlying Eurasianist vision of the author, which may be seen as a heritage of the universalist stance of Russian modernist tradition, on the one hand, and as a response to the national identity crisis that arose from the contemporary geopolitical circumstances on the other. The imagery of China served largely as a product of poetic imagination in Pilnyak's works written before 1922, where it continued the palimpsestic inscription of the myth of China in the Russian literary milieu, perpetuating the conceptual internalization of "China" in the self-fashioning of Russia. An example of this is the image of "Kitai-gorod" in his novel *The Naked Year*, which generated different symbolic meanings of China. From 1922 on, the variations of narrative settings in Pilnyak's prose reflected the impact of contemporary events in China on his ruminations on the historical relationship of Russia and Asia. Of seminal significance was his excursion to China in 1926, the product of which became *The Chinese Diary*, in which China figured as a point of reference for Russia in its self-reflection on socio-political and ideological fluctuations. Combining imagination of history and commentary on reality, Pilnyak's various conceptions of China served to illuminate the shifting identity of Russia from both the mythologized past and the highlighted present.

The Naked Year

PILNYAK

China

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Mickiewicz's Pretexts, or Comments on the Margins of Archival Research*

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Margins

This article was written during quarantine (hence the somewhat limited bibliography), but it is a result of nearly four years of research in the archives and libraries in Vilnius and Krakow. My research focused primarily on literature courses taught at Vilnius University. Thus, I wandered on the margins of what literary scholars usually do (browsing through student notes, reports from faculty councils or library reports) and I did not intend to make spectacular discoveries at the center of my field of studies. While I believe that working on the periphery is worthwhile in itself, coming across a “big” name, for example, the name of Adam Mickiewicz, was nevertheless exciting.

I experienced such joy in the Lithuanian State Historical Archives while I was reviewing examination reports of the Department of Literature and Liberal Arts. On page 10 of manuscript No. 1114, I read: “The Dean opened the session with the presentation of the candidate Adam Mickiewicz.”¹ The examination report includes questions on the history of Greek literature, mythology, “the study of antiquity” and Roman antiquities (asked by Professor Gottfried Groddeck), aesthetics, poetry and rhetoric (asked by Leon Borowski), the history of Russian literature and the Russian language (asked by Professor Jan Czerniawski) and logic (asked by Father Anioł Dowgird). It should be emphasized that both questions and answers were in three languages: Latin, Polish and Russian. They provide us with an insight into Mickiewicz’s literary consciousness. However, questions on aesthetics, poetics and rhetoric, i.e. questions on the nature of art, including literature, and the structure of a literary work of art, are particularly interesting for a literary scholar.

Before I examine them in more detail, I shall discuss questions that were easier to answer. It has been known that Mickiewicz’s examination report, hidden among many other reports, exists. The date of the exam and the fact that such an examination report was made are recorded in *Kronika życia i twórczości Mickiewicza*² [The chronicle of Mickiewicz’s life and work]. It is also mentioned in *Kronika...* that the latter is discussed in *Korespondencja Adama Mickiewicza* [Adam Mickiewicz’s letters], published in 1885 in Paris, although it should be noted that the volume of this edition is not quoted correctly, which makes it more difficult to find the right text.³ *Korespondencja* also contains other documents from the Vilnius University archives. Indeed, in order to get to know the exam questions one does not need to visit Lithuania or decipher microfilms – the digital version of the text is available online.⁴

This discovery, which was not really a discovery, raises the question of why, as far I know, contemporary researchers were not interested in Mickiewicz’s pre-text. In order to answer this question, at least partially, we must refer to the foreword to *Korespondencja*. The motivations of the publisher who published the documents in the 1880s in Paris are easy to understand. In the *Foreword*, Władysław Mickiewicz argues that the letters written by the poet’s friends should be published because they constitute “a very valuable source for Adam Mickiewicz’s future biography.”⁵ He further observes: “For the greater convenience of future biographers, we also present the documents concerning the Mickiewicz family.”⁶ Although further reasons for publishing all documents related to the Polish bard are not convincing and have little in common with the examination report (Władysław declares that he published everything, because the manuscripts, especially letters, were published without his consent and knowledge anyway, and he wished to put an end to harmful “anecdotes”), they explain that the publication was motivated by biographical inquires. University files and reports were apparently

¹ Lietuvos valstybes istorijos archyvas (LVIA, Lithuanian State Historical Archives), manuscript. f. 721 o. 1 no. 1114, k. 10r. Contemporary spelling.

² *Kronika życia i twórczości Mickiewicza. Lata 1798–1824* [The chronicle of Mickiewicz’s life and work 1798–1824], ed. Maria Dernałowicz, Ksenia Kostenicz, Zofia Makowiecka (Warsaw: PIW, 1957).

³ *Korespondencja Adama Mickiewicza* [Adam Mickiewicz’s letters], vol. 4 (Paris: Księgarnia Luxemburska, 1885), 42–43. Vol. 1 is given in *Kronika*.

⁴ On the website of the National Library “Polona.”

⁵ *Korespondencja, Przedmowa* [Foreword], no page is given.

⁶ *Korespondencja*.

considered important, since, as evidenced by a relevant footnote, they were extracted from the Prince Władysław Czartoryski archives.⁷

We thus interpret this and other texts, often discovered and published in the nineteenth century, in a particular context, one that is archaic and has little in common with literary studies. When we read them in the context of the publications on Adam Mickiewicz's life or letters, it is implied that they will primarily provide us with information about what Adam Mickiewicz did on May 29, 1819. The examination report appears to be an interesting secondary source, at best, because Mickiewicz's exact words are not recorded in it – it only records the exam proceedings and questions. Therefore, we should ask if and how this document may become relevant in literary studies.

Laboratory: Probable history

I did not find Mickiewicz's examination report in the Lithuanian State Historical Archives by accident or without prior research. Indeed, I analysed the reports of the Department of Literature and Liberal Arts to gather as much information as possible about the rhetoric and poetry course taught at the university, first by Euzebiusz Słowacki, and then by Leon Borowski. I was interested in all examination reports and not only in the exam taken by Mickiewicz, which seems to be the most interesting to the modern reader. The very fact that such records exist is discussed in a little-known article by Anna Kaupuž, published in the Lithuanian journal *Literatura* [Literature].⁸ Kaupuž also names the archive in which they are kept. In her article, the scholar examines Slavic philology (i.e. Polish and Russian literature) courses at Vilnius University⁹ and analyses exam questions to reconstruct Leon Borowski's views on literature. However, she does not mention that Mickiewicz took this exam as well.

Kaupuž's article demonstrates that the same document may be used differently in different contexts: the scholar uses it to describe the history of an academic institution. The biographical and institutional perspectives employed to analyse Mickiewicz's examination report could not be more different from one another. The first perspective appears to be outdated today, while the second perspective is not particularly encouraging for the researcher (it involves a long and difficult research process) and the reader (no spectacular findings are described). The analysis of dozens of exam questions allows one only to determine more or less the issues and problems discussed in Borowski's course and his eclectic views on aesthetics, which were in fact typical of late classicism.

Kaupuž's article provides a theoretical and methodological framework for analysing the exam questions, but it is also important for another reason. The researcher tries to reconstruct the

⁷ *Korespondencja*, 41.

⁸ Anna Kaupuž, "K woprosu o problematike kursa literatury w starom Wilniuskom Uniwersitietie", *Literatura*, no. XIII (3), (1970).

⁹ Her unpublished Ph.D. thesis is also devoted to this topic. It is an invaluable source of knowledge about manuscripts related to Vilnius University. I had the opportunity to read the typescript of the Ph.D. thesis courtesy of Dr. Irena Masojć.

expected answers using study notes made during Borowski's lectures, which are also deposited in the archive. The notes focus on aesthetics, and the respective sections of the text correspond to some of the exam questions. This peculiar experiment, combining questions and answers, may also be used in a more precise analysis of Mickiewicz's questions.

Before I analyse them in more detail, however, the mode of matching questions and answers should be verified. Upon closer analysis (i.e. when we compare this document with an identical manuscript found in the Vilnius University Library), the manuscript which Kaupuž considers to be study notes turns out to be a fragment of a translated textbook used by professor Borowski.¹⁰ The issues discussed in the extract from the original German textbook correspond to the questions on aesthetics Leon Borowski asked during the exam. The questions on poetry and rhetoric are more difficult to reconstruct, as we do not have access to a document which summarizes these parts of the course. The original German textbook may be helpful: literary genres are discussed in the second part of the book. Finally, the third source which may provide us with some clues are Eusebiusz Słowacki's essays *O poezji* [Poetry] and *O wymowie* [Rhetoric] published in *Dzieła z pozostałych rękopismów ogłoszone* [Other published manuscripts].¹¹

Słowacki, the head of the Department before Borowski, prepared handwritten notes for his university classes. They were published between 1825 and 1826 in *Dzieła z pozostałych rękopismów ogłoszone*, with a preface by Borowski. Fragments of Słowacki's handwritten notes had been published earlier in *Dziennik Wileński* [The Vilnius Daily Newspaper],¹² where Borowski also published his texts. Borowski took over as the head of the Department in the fall of 1814, shortly before Słowacki's death. It seems that Borowski used Słowacki's notes when he began teaching (Słowacki had to resign on account of his illness). It should be added that Słowacki also used Eschenburg's textbook. Finally, if we compare some exam questions with the order of argumentation presented in *O poezji*, it turns out that the two are indeed very similar, which probably resulted from the fact that Borowski and Słowacki used the same textbook.

Thus, it seems that we can try and conduct our experiment and formulate the answers to the questions Mickiewicz was asked during his exam. We can refer to literature textbooks used at Vilnius University, translations used by students (and some original passages) and Słowacki's texts (which were connected with his lectures). This procedure seems to strike a balance between too narrow and too wide a choice of sources. Too strict a procedure would actually make it impossible to recreate the answers, because we do not have access to notes from Leon

¹⁰I explain in detail why there are two copies of Johann Joachim Eschenburg's *Entwurf einer Theorie und Literatur der schönen Redekünste* translated by Leon Borowski in the Vilnius archives in the book *Odnajdywanie języka dyscypliny. Literaturoznawstwo wileńskie i warszawskie 1809–1830* [Finding the language of the discipline: Literary studies in Vilnius and Warsaw 1809–1830] (Warsaw: IBL, 2020), in the chapter *Ustęp metodologiczny. Archiwa i Leon Borowski* [Notes on methodology: Archives and Leon Borowski].

¹¹Eusebiusz Słowacki, *O poezji* [Poetry] and *O wymowie* [Rhetoric] in: *Dzieła z pozostałych rękopismów ogłoszone* [Other published manuscripts], vol. 2 (Vilnius: Józef Zawadzki, 1826).

¹²The essay *O sztuce dobrego pisania w języku polskim* [On the art of good writing in Polish] was published in "Dziennik Wileński" 1815, vol. 1, in issues 3 (pp. 202–246), 4 (pp. 301–330), 5 (s. 404–445) and 6 (pp. 489–513). *O przekładaniu z obcych języków na ojczysty* [On translating from foreign languages into the native language] was published in "Dziennik Wileński" 1820, vol. 3, no. 12, pp. 405–426.

Borowski's lectures. Respectively, in a more liberal perspective, we could also take into account the popular views on specific issues in a given era. Naturally, we could also reconstruct the answers on the basis of other historical treatises, but then we would lose sight of the Vilnius perspective. Such answers would reflect the principles of late Classicist poetics, but they would not reflect what (Mickiewicz) was taught at Vilnius University.

Therefore, it seems reasonable to refer to texts which not only address the issues indicated in the questions but also seem to be structured as study notes. The exam procedure did not change much over time. Mickiewicz was asked three questions on aesthetics, poetry and rhetoric, which corresponded to the organization of Borowski's lectures. The answers to the questions could be found in the notes (it is impossible to determine whether students had access to Słowacki's notes in 1819, but they certainly used Eschenburg's translation, since two copies have survived; the professor probably gave it to them, asking them to rewrite it).

Naturally, I create a research structure at this point: a possibility that does not exist as a textual fact in the historical reality. The expected answers to the exam questions will always function in the sphere of the probable, not to mention the actual answers given by the student. It seems, however, that although we are working in a literary studies laboratory, beyond the sphere of the historiographically proven, we have the right to formulate answers to such questions. Did Borowski use Słowacki's notes and conduct the exam accordingly? Did he translate the German textbook and did he recommend that students use it? Textual similarities are significant, though not conclusive.

The category of "probable history" coined by Danuta Ulicka may be useful in our analysis. Describing the "probable" relationship between Bakhtin and Stefan Srebrny (it is "probable" because it is based on one statement), Ulicka postulates that such a form of writing history should be recognized as a valid practice in the study of the history of literary studies.¹³ In view of the inevitable scarcity of sources, it allows one to examine and record new historical connections and problems that have not been critically examined before. The latter is the measure of the success and legitimacy of writing "probable" history. The practice is substantiated: it is firmly rooted in the historical context which justifies textual events and relationships. Indeed, it must lead to valid conclusions, allowing one to reclaim historical reality that would otherwise be lost. It is time, therefore, to write "probable" history based on Mickiewicz's pre-text.

Classicist Q&A

The exam questions were as follows:

I. Aesthetics

1. Aesthetic illusion (*illusio*) in the fine arts.
2. The illusion of the external senses in the visual arts.
3. The relation between illusion and partiality in the speech arts.

¹³See Danuta Ulicka, *Słowa i ludzie* [Words and people] (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo IBL, 2013), 63–67.

4. This impression combined and intensified in the dramatic art.
5. Does illusion in art exhibitions can be so advanced and so perfect that imitation seems to be reality?
6. Even if illusion could be perfected to such a degree, does art moderate and soften it, why?
7. Different degrees of illusion in different types of fine arts.

II. Poetry

1. The epic poem: definition and types.
2. Action and the unity of action in the heroic novel.
3. Do digressions hinder unity?
4. Importance and greatness of action.
5. The characters of heroes.
6. Best examples and comments on the characters.

III. Rhetoric

1. Rhetoric in preaching, its beginnings.
2. How does it differ from ancient rhetoric?
3. Rhetoric principles shared by preachers and other speakers.
4. The best examples of rhetoric in preaching in French literature.
5. The rhetoric talent of great Polish historical preachers (Skarga, Birkowski) and contemporary Polish preachers (Krapowicz, Kaliński).¹⁴

Let us look for answers.

Eschenburg discussed “aesthetic illusion” in the introductory part of the textbook translated by Borowski. It is described in paragraphs 14, 15 and 16 (in the 1817 version from the Historical Archives; in the 1819 version from the University Library, it is described in paragraphs 13, 14 and 15¹⁵). The answers to the exam questions may be found in paragraph 14. While they are rather general, they correspond to the first three or four questions on the list:

The goal of art is to create *illusio*, that is, to mislead the external or the internal sense so skilfully that artistic imitation is believed to be reality created by real objects. This illusion is external, generated by one’s partiality to works of art, and it is stronger when both these aspects work together in one’s imagination. The degree of their power, however, depends not only on the talent of the skilful artist, but also on the tenderness and understanding of the viewer or the reader, as well as on the voluntary surrender of one’s imagination [...].¹⁶

One may wonder whether the examiner asked all the questions at once or one by one, so that the student answered one question and his answer was recorded (in bullet points) in the report. In relation to the quoted fragment of the textbook, the questions specify what kind of illusion applies to what kind of art (according to the commonly accepted division into the

¹⁴*Korespondencja*, 43. The questions were arranged in a list in the original manuscript.

¹⁵Vilniaus Universiteto Biblioteka (VUB, Vilnius University Library), manuscript. F2-DC236.

¹⁶VUB, manuscript. F2-DC236, k.4v. Supplement based on the 1817 version.

“speech” arts, such as poetry and rhetoric, and the “pictorial arts,” i.e. the fine arts). The answers to the respective questions may be deduced from the questions that come first. This is the case with questions 5 and 6: it is implied in question 6 that the answer to question 5 should be: yes, imitation in art may seem like reality; it depends both on the talent of the artist and the predispositions of the reader; however, art moderates and softens the power of such illusion. Notwithstanding this, neither the questions nor the textbook explain why.

The (rather general) answers to most questions on aesthetics, may be found in *Rys teorii* [Theory outline] (this is how Borowski translated the beginning of the title of the textbook he used¹⁷). The answers to the questions on rhetoric are more difficult to find (I will discuss poetry at the end of this article): I was not able to identify what part of the German textbook or what part of Słowacki's essays provide direct answers to the exam questions. The analysis of other sources does not bring any spectacular effects either. Borowski discussed the influence of cultural changes on literature in his professorial dissertation a year later, arguing that there is a fundamental difference between ancient and Christian poetry and rhetoric (closely related to the socio-political system), insofar as the two approach the supernatural sphere in a completely different way.¹⁸ However, he did not discuss rhetoric in preaching. The only scholar from the Vilnius circle who discussed rhetoric in preaching in one chapter of his textbook was Filip Neriusz Golański, a Biblical scholar and earlier a lecturer in rhetoric and poetry. In a fairly long chapter in the 1808 edition of *O wymowie i poezji* [On rhetoric and poetry], he discussed the role of the preacher and his texts, as well as the fact that the preacher was no longer respected by his contemporaries in the nineteenth century.¹⁹ Although Golański writes about rhetoric in preaching in general, his observations do not give us answers to the exam questions. If we want to discuss only sources directly related to teaching rhetoric at Vilnius University, and not rely on general knowledge and beliefs held in the early nineteenth century, we must accept that we fail in this respect.

We may, however, find answers to the questions on the epic poem. The answers to the six exam questions correspond to the respective paragraphs in Eschenburg's textbook and thus, in turn, in Słowacki's notes as well. Eschenburg describes the epic poem in chapter VIII, i.e. the chapter devoted to poetry and epic forms (*epische Dichtungsarten*; he divides all genres into epic and dramatic forms).²⁰ Słowacki describes various types of epic poetry in “class III” devoted to epic forms (he also distinguishes “lyrical forms,” “didactic forms,” and “dramatic forms”).²¹ The answers to all questions in Eschenburg's and Słowacki's texts are presented in the table below:

¹⁷In an essay devoted to late Leon Borowski, Dominik Chodźko openly states that the professor used Eschenburg's textbook in his lectures: “he used modest Eschenburg in his classes.” Dominik Chodźko, “Leon Borowski. Wspomnienie” [Leon Borowski: *In memoriam*], *Athenaeum* 1, issue 1 (1847): 137.

¹⁸Leon Borowski, “Uwagi nad poezją i wymową pod względem podobieństwa i różnicy” [The similarities and differences between poetry and rhetoric] in: *Uwagi nad poezją i wymową i inne pisma krytycznoliterackie* [Notes on poetry and rhetoric and other critical literary writings], ed. Stanisław Buśka-Wroński (Warsaw: PIW 1972), 68.

¹⁹Filip Neriusz Golański, *O wymowie i poezji* [On rhetoric and poetry] (Vilnius: Józef Zawadzki, 1808), 415–460.

²⁰Johann Joachim Eschenburg, *Entwurf einer Theorie und Literatur der schönen Redekünste* (Berlin–Stettin: Friedrich Nicolai, 1783), 120–143.

²¹Słowacki, 97–116.

Questions	Eschenburg	Słowacki
1. The epic poem: definition and types.	Allgemeine Erklärung	§55. A heroic poem, or an epic poem, is [...].
2. Action and the unity of action in the heroic novel.	§1. Handlung derselben und deren Einheit	§56–57. The most essential attribute of the matter which is the subject of the epic must be unity [...].
3. Do digressions hinder unity?	§2–3. Episoden	§56. To render his text more diverse, without which, as we have already observed, it can be neither beautiful nor engaging, the poet may add digressions [...].
4. Importance and greatness of action.	(§4. Interesse und dessen Beförderung durch Hindernisse der Handlung)	§58. It is equally essential that the epic is devoted to great and important things [...]
5. The characters of heroes.	§5–6. Handelnde Personen und deren Charakteren	§59. The characters of the people acting in the epic [...].
6. Best examples and comments on the characters.	§18–22.	§69–76.

As can be seen, the questions correspond to the content and the structure of both dissertations. There are minor differences between the two textbooks. Eschenburg does not directly address the question of the “importance and greatness” of action, focusing instead on the narrative structure that would keep the reader engaged (according to the table of contents, this question is discussed in §4; in fact, it is discussed in §4, §5, and §6; the importance of action was discussed in those sections as well; however, “characters” are discussed only in §7 and §8). Respectively, Słowacki does not discuss digressions in a separate section, commenting on this question in a section devoted to the unity of action. Indeed, Słowacki employs exactly the same terms as the examiner (although it should be noted that they were also translated from German), and develops his argument in keeping with the order of the exam questions. Before they discuss examples, both authors also discuss “the marvellous” in the epic. Students were asked to answer this question in the second, written, part of the exam (June 4).²²

Thus, if we refer to appropriate historical sources, we are able to assume the role of the examiner and answer the questions on poetics (fully), aesthetics (quite generally), and rhetoric (to a limited extent). A fundamental question now arises: what is the value of such an approach? What new literary perspectives does such a reconstruction open up?

A digression on digressions

The answer to each question requires that the student possessed a considerable knowledge of literature from antiquity to the nineteenth century. Thus, for example, issues related to *illutio* were at the time connected with the questions pertaining to the essence and purpose of art in general, the types of arts and the types of signs, linguistics and the art of speech, and the nature

²²*Korespondencja*, 45. Professor Onacewicz also asked general questions on world history.

of artistic *mimesis*.²³ Therefore, I will take a closer look, though I will not discuss it exhaustively, with only one, exemplary, question on poetics.

Leon Borowski asked: Do digressions hinder unity? Euzebiusz Słowacki thus answers this question in his notes:

To render his text more diverse, without which, as we have already observed, it can be neither beautiful nor engaging, the poet may add digressions and episodes, but, even though they result from the central theme, they should not distract from it; indeed, they should render it brighter and more vivid. The epic may be compared to a river; it may come across obstacles, but despite meanders and deviations, it does not stop flowing in the direction indicated by its slope. It is divided into various distributaries, embraces islands, streams, channels and new rivers, but it is one. While it may reach the ocean as either one or many estuaries, it is always one and the same river, which follows its elemental direction.²⁴

As the question itself suggests, the issue of “digressions” is closely related to an important classicist aesthetic category: unity. Słowacki also mentions the second aesthetic principle: variety. A proper use of “digressions” provides for balance between the two. The term “digression” was sometimes used interchangeably with the Greek word “episode;” nevertheless, the former was used more often in nineteenth-century texts. It referred to a fragment of a literary work which constituted a whole, separate from the main text and not directly related to the main course of action or theme. It may be defined in more detail in relation to specific literary genres.²⁵

Why is the problem of “digressions” and the unity of the work particularly interesting in relation to Mickiewicz? It should be noted that the poet discussed this topic independently in his review of Dyzma Bończa-Tomaszewski’s *Jagiellonida* [Epic of Jagiełło] published in January 1819 in *Pamiętnik Warszawski* [Warsaw Diary]:

Action is truly action when all, even smaller, events introduced into it develop from the same point, in a constant dependence on one another, become entangled and are finally resolved; descriptions and images which do not contribute to the main action are only episodes which, though necessary, must be used properly. It is true that our imagination, preoccupied with the main action, feels the need for smaller images, because they and their beauty may be comprehended more easily, so that our mind can rest and nourish itself in a way [...]. The use of digressions, therefore, serves the purpose of easing the tension, and therefore, although they are combined into the main action, adding variety and charm, they cannot constitute poems in their own rights, for such poems, without interest, would, as Voltaire says, be similar to a framework in which, according to

²³Some of these issues, especially the role of language in imitating real objects, are discussed in: Zdzisława Kopczyńska, “Malowanie słowami” [Painting with words] in: *Język a poezja. Studia z dziejów świadomości językowej i literackiej oświecenia i romantyzmu* [Language and poetry: Studies in the history of linguistic and literary consciousness in the Enlightenment and Romanticism] (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1976), 48–85.

²⁴Słowacki, 98–99.

²⁵In the definition of “digressions,” I refer to my earlier research. I have already written about this word as a concept and term of classicist poetics twice. First, in *Forum of Poetics* 2016, no. 5, “Additions’ and the Category of Unity in the Poetics of Post-Stanisław Classicism”, and then, more extensively in the book *Odnajdywanie języka dyscypliny*. A detailed analysis of the term may be found in these two texts.

one's liking, one may insert digressions like pictures, and from which one may choose what one likes. It can be seen in *Jagiellonida*.²⁶

Apparently, the position of the young author is in line with what his teacher might have expected of him.

The problem of “digressions” is obviously related to two works by Mickiewicz, which occupy the most important place in Polish culture: Part 3 of *Dziady* [Forefather's Eve] and *Pan Tadeusz*. Moreover, “digressions” in both of these works are usually analyzed in a completely different frame of reference than the classicist theory of the unity of a literary work. Indeed, *Słownik terminów literackich* [Dictionary of literary terms] defines digression as follows:

1. a short textual unit, which is relatively independent in terms of content, usually in the form of a separate paragraph; 2. in romantic literature, a fragment of a work, independent in terms of content, but at the same time functioning as an element of a larger literary whole, as regards the main theme, idea, and attitude of the author, e.g. Part 3 of *Dziady*.²⁷

Although this definition was written by an Enlightenment literature specialist, Teresa Kostkiewiczowa, it does not refer to “digression” in the classicist sense. The first explanation is very general, specific to contemporary linguistic practice, and the second explanation concerns romantic literature and seems to be inspired directly by the third part of *Dziady*. However, it seems that the starting point for the analysis of digressions in *Dziady* should be the classicist understanding of the word digression, even if it is possible that it also gave rise to a new romantic meaning. This particular “digression” is a short fragment in an epic poem, synonymous with the “episode” discussed by Mickiewicz in his review of *Jagiellonida* and during his exam. It describes the journey of the protagonist, but it is separate from the main plot: such descriptions, which described the adventures of the protagonist that did not directly contribute to the main action, were very popular in classicist epic “digressions.” What is unusual (of course, if we consider the normative poetics of late classicism as our point of reference) is the inclusion of epic “digressions” in the text of the drama. It is all the more puzzling, since authors were told to avoid adding episodes to dramatic works. This solution may be considered controversial.

In *Pan Tadeusz*, the role of “digressions” is consistent with, for example, principles discussed by Eschenburg and Słowacki: “episodes” allow the reader to rest and add variety. Critical academic discourse analyzes “episodes” in a different interpretive framework. Even a cursory review of such studies²⁸ shows that two terminological tendencies dominate in them, not without significance for the chosen interpretive context. Therefore, we sometimes talk about “digressions” (*dygresje*) in *Pan Tadeusz*, which directs our attention to the narrative “storyteller.” The digressive poem, in which

²⁶Adam Mickiewicz, “Uwagi nad Jagiellonidą D. Bończy Tomaszewskiego” [Review of D. Bończa-Tomaszewski's *Jagiellonida*], *Pamiętnik Warszawski* 5, vol. 13 (January 1819): 72.

²⁷Teresa Kostkiewiczowa, “Ustęp” [Digression] in: *Słownik terminów literackich* [Dictionary of literary terms], ed. Janusz Sławiński (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1988), 550.

²⁸Google search provides material for preliminary research. If we search for “digressions (*ustępy*) in *Pan Tadeusz*,” the results refer to the above-mentioned “digression on hemp” in the poem and “digressions” in the sense of any fragment of the text. On the other hand, if we search for “episodes in *Pan Tadeusz*” and “digressions (*dygresje*) in *Pan Tadeusz*,” the results refer to popular websites for students, for example sciaga.pl, aleklasa.pl, brainly.pl, opracowania.edu.pl.

the role of fragments which function “next to” the main action, was subjected to radical reevaluation, and thus becomes a natural point of reference. Such a context would be interesting and allow us to emphasize dialogical nature of the genre in contrast to the classic epic; however, it is not very productive in the context of Mickiewicz’s work. Alternatively, we can talk about “episodes” (*epizody*) in *Pan Tadeusz*, which brings to mind the classic school division of characters and plots into primary (main), secondary and tertiary (episodic). This division may be applied almost mechanically to virtually every epic. It is often used in schools to help students structure their knowledge of the plot. This approach is probably motivated by the need to emphasize the completeness and complexity of the fictional world, characteristic for the classicist epic and, later, novels.

Indeed, terminological choices are important. They locate the text in an entire conceptual literary system, allowing us to discover different relationships and dependencies. In *Pan Tadeusz*, Mickiewicz used the term “digression” (*ustęp*) in the above-mentioned meaning only once.²⁹ In Book VI, *The Hamlet*, there is a section called “A digression on hemp.” Perhaps such textual evidence is not enough to activate the extensive theory behind this term in the analysis of the poem’s structure. Naturally, the question of unity and diversity as well as question of the reader’s engagement in the classicist theory of the epic should be discussed considering the numerous links between the poem and this tradition. Nevertheless, the indication of two pre-texts: *Uwag nad Jagiellonią* and the exam questions allows us to highlight this issue and emphasize the fact that Mickiewicz must have been influenced by it.

Pretexts and philological anthropology: Summary

The discovery of the exam questions on “digressions” (*ustępy*) allows us to interpret Mickiewicz’s works in the context of classicist poetics. Indeed, pre-texts may be used effectively in interpretation as a slightly modified “biographical strategy.” After all, the author is a pretext for analyzing different documents together. Moreover, we focus on the text itself, especially as regards outstanding works, and after all in our study of pre-texts we are driven by our interpretative desire. However, an alternative approach is also possible: we can modify the “institutional” approach, as exemplified by the study of the history of the university, and study the literary consciousness of a given era (e.g. on the basis of such documents as Mickiewicz’s exam questions), and then situate individual works within it.

It seems that an approach which combines these two strategies is the most productive. There should be a balance between the individual (“work”) and the collective (“institution”). In this approach, the pre-text is not only a pre-text of a given text, but also a building block that allows us to reconstruct literary consciousness and intellectual atmosphere of a given era. Traditional philological and archival work allows us to contextualize individual texts in a network of dependencies. It seems that philological anthropology could follow this path between “close” and “distant” reading.

translated by Małgorzata Olsza

²⁹In book XII, “digression” (*ustęp*) means, according to one of the meanings that was already archaic in the nineteenth century, a break in the session of the sejmik.

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KEYWORDS

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ABSTRACT:

The article analyses manuscripts and other archival documents as pre-texts of literary texts, with a view to demonstrating how they may be used most effectively in literary studies. An examination report with questions that Adam Mickiewicz was asked during his diploma examination at Vilnius University is discussed. The author analyses other archival and printed sources as well, trying to reconstruct the desired answers to the questions, and then outlines the benefits of employing such an archival procedure in the analysis of Mickiewicz's works.

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The Works of Józef Wittlin: The Perspective of Genetic Criticism

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In the present article, I discuss the benefits of employing genetic criticism in the study of Józef Wittlin's works. Such a critical approach has not been discussed in critical works devoted to Wittlin. The benefits of such a critical approach have been briefly outlined in the present article, as will be discussed in more detail herein.¹ In the present article, I discuss the relationship between genetic criticism and poetics. It should be emphasized that I will focus on poetics in motion, the evolving poetics of the author.

Hymns

First, let me discuss the characteristic features of Józef Wittlin's works and creative process. His creative process is essentially one of improvement, the best and most striking example of

¹ In my Ph.D. thesis, I wish to focus on Józef Wittlin's writing process and manuscripts and analyze selected examples.

which is his translation of the *Odyssey*, which has been published in three different editions.² It was his life's work, which he began as a middle-school student in Lviv.³ Each subsequent edition differed from the previous one because the writer wished to soften the influence of the poetics of Young Poland, which was prominent in the first edition. However, in the present article, in order to demonstrate how the poet worked with the texts he had already published, I will use the second equally important example of the aforementioned writing strategy, i.e. *Hymny* [Hymns],⁴ and specifically, the poem *Przedśpiew* [Prelude] which is the first poem in *Hymny*. I aim to compare texts in subsequent editions and describe textual modifications. This issue was to some extent discussed in the literature on the subject: researchers pointed to the general nature of changes in different editions of the texts, but the methodology of genetic criticism has never been employed in analysis.

Indeed, genetic criticism of printed texts is defined as follows:

the study of manuscripts, however, should be a genetic analysis of the writing processes, which can be distinguished on the basis of changes in the printed text, because the textual situation reveals, which almost always happens, numerous and significant transformations of a given text in subsequent editions. The genetics of printed texts differs from the genetics of manuscripts in terms of terminology adopted to describe the characteristics of the analyzed text. "Variations in different editions" record the discrepancies between successive but equivalent forms of the published text, they are not synonymous with modifications found in draft versions of manuscripts, with the successive stages of the writing process, where everything can be undermined at any moment, as long as the (still potential) text has not reached its final form. By referring to other principles and using tools different tools from philology, genetic criticism of printed texts examines the history of textual transformations, introduced both during the writer's lifetime (genetic criticism of authorial variants) and after his death (genetic criticism of post-authorial variants). In the perspective provided by genetic criticism, changes in the published text should be viewed in the greater context of the process of genesis: it is a genesis without *terminus ad quem*, it is co-created by changes related to the reception and the future of the work.⁵

It should be emphasized that modifications found in *Hymny* should be interpreted as a consistent and conscious strategy of the author, the main goal of which was to cleanse the works of expressionist features. It seems that the changes made by Wittlin helped improve his works. Kazimierz Nowosielski observes that:

² Józef Wittlin published three different translations (1924, 1931, 1957). Zoya Yurieff discusses the differences between them in: *Józef Wittlin*, trans. Michał Szczubiałka (Warsaw: Świat Literacki, 1997), 49–60.

³ *Sprawozdanie Dyrekcji C. K. VII Gimnazjum we Lwowie za rok szkolny 1913/1914* [Report of the Director of the Imperial and Royal VII Junior High School in Lvov for the school year 1913/1914] (Lvov: Fundusz Naukowy, 1914), 64.

⁴ The first edition was published by the Zdrój publishing house. The second edition was published in 1927 as *Hymny (wybór)* [Hymns (selection)] by Księgarnia F. Hoesicka and the third edition was published in 1929 by Jakub Morkowicz's publishing house. The fourth edition, edited by Wittlin, was published posthumously in 1978 as a "poetic testament." All editions differ. As in the case of the *Odyssey*, Wittlin wished to minimize features typical of Young Poland and expressionist poetics. The final edition was prepared by Wittlin in exile in the United States, when the poet was working on his book of poems, which, as has been pointed out, was published only after his death. The final edition of the poems in *Poezje* [Poems] significantly differs from earlier versions. Poems are more minimalistic and more economical in terms of form. The poet did not include some of them in the anthology.

⁵ Pierre-Marc de Biasi, *La Génétique des textes* (Paris: CNRS Editions, 2000), 45–46.

The poet was rebuilding his poems in subsequent editions of *Hymns*. The nature of his artistic interference will be discussed later in this essay. Depending on the issue at hand, I will use the first or later editions, even though the final edition, as J. Rogoziński writes in his introduction to *Poezje*, [...] was considered canonical by the artist. I refer to previous editions because some characteristic features of the poet's early works disappeared in later editions (most often, it made the poems better).⁶

Irena Maciejewska also discussed this issue. Importantly, she also refers to *Przedśpiew*:

[...] Wittlin was concerned with one thing only. For him, as a human being and as a writer, *Hymns* were alive and important, and throughout his life he corrected, chiseled, modified, and "translated" them into a language that was more understandable for younger generations of readers. He worked on his poems for years on end, he worked on the final form, because for him poetry was the ultimate goal, he saw in it the only and last refuge of the "private" and the metaphysical. Subsequent editions of *Hymns* (1927 and 1929) were changed and improved. The posthumous edition of 1978, prepared in the last years of the writer's life, is so cleansed of the old expressionist and Young Poland style, so condensed and at the same time enriched and artistically strengthened that it actually constitutes a new text. A text in which, as if in a palimpsest, the poet inscribed the experience of the Second World War onto the image of the First World War. This experience made him simplify the language of poetry and reject "poetic dance" (Różewicz's term) and create a "naked," raw and ascetic poem. I will discuss one most obvious example, namely the first poem in *Hymny*, *Przedśpiew*, in which of the 24 lines in the first edition, 15 lines remained in the final fourth edition, and only 7 lines remained unchanged from the first edition. *Przedśpiew* demonstrates in what direction the writer was going: [...].⁷

Aleksandra Szczepan also wrote about the modifications in *Hymny* in the context of the trauma of the First World War in Polish literature:

For the writer, this volume was a laboratory of constant corrections and artistic reformulations, and at the same time it was a material record of the experienced trauma. The 1978 edition of *Hymny* (the second and third editions were published before the war, in 1927 and 1929), prepared by Wittlin in the final years of his life, included fifteen of the twenty-one originally published poems, and *Psalm*, which was written in the 1920s. The poet mainly corrected and changed punctuation (numerous exclamation marks, ellipses, and dashes disappear), the layout and the length of the works – Wittlin often removes entire stanzas, combining them into somewhat irregular units with longer lines. In some cases, he adds words or lines that change the tone of the poem.⁸

⁶ Kazimierz Nowosielski, "Hiobowe wołanie Józefa Wittlina" [The Job's cry of Józef Wittlin], in: *idem Przestrzeń oczekiwania. Historia, natura, sacrum we współczesnej poezji polskiej* [The space of awaiting: History, nature, sacrum in contemporary Polish poetry] (Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Gdańskiego, 1993), 24. See Ewa Wiegandt, *Wstęp, wstęp do Józef Wittlin, Sól ziemi* [Introduction, introduction to Józef Wittlin, *Salt of the Earth*], ed. Ewa Wiegandt (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1991), XXIII–XXIV.

⁷ Irena Maciejewska, "Doświadczenie wielkiej wojny – Józef Wittlin" [The Experience of the Great War - Józef Wittlin], in: *Poeci dwudziestolecia międzywojennego* [Poets of the interwar period], ed. Irena Maciejewska, vol. 2 (Warsaw: Wiedza Powszechna, 1982), 492–493.

⁸ Aleksandra Szczepan, "Traumatyczna niepamięć: doświadczenie Wielkiej Wojny w polskiej literaturze dwudziestolecia" [Traumatic amnesia: The experience of the Great War in Polish literature of the interwar period], *Przegląd Kulturoznawczy* no. 4 (2014): 423–424.

I discuss four versions of *Przedśpiew* in the present article:

- the first edition – Poznań 1920,
- the second edition – Warsaw 1927,
- the third edition – Warsaw 1929,
- the posthumous editions – Warsaw 1978/1981 and Kraków 1998.

The biggest changes are noticeable when we compare the first and the last editions. In these two opposite versions of the text (in terms of their dates of publication), we may notice a fundamental reduction in terms of content.⁹ I discuss *Przedśpiew* as an exemplary text, demonstrating how Józef Wittlin modified the entire volume in general.¹⁰

The first edition (Poznań 1920)

Jeszcze jest we mnie krzyk ginących bataljonów I pamięć z trzaskiem rozwalonych tronów – – A już przybywam, a dążę, a spieszę, Obładowany jukiem świeżych plonów.	The scream of dying battalions is still in me And memory of the sound of collapsed thrones – – And I'm coming, I'm going, and I'm in a hurry, Loaded with bags of fresh crops.
Jeszcze drga we mnie gorącość pożarów Otchłannych piekieł i jeszcze mnie dławi Ohyda krwawych, zatrutych oparów – A już przynoszę wam moc cudnych darów, Darów bez liku – – – – Bądźcie mi łaskawi.	The heat of fires in the abyss of hell Is still vibrating in me and the hateful bloody, poisoned fumes are still choking me – And I bring you the numerous wonderful gifts, Countless gifts – – – – Be kind to me.
Jeszcze mi czarny dzień, jak czarna zmora Leży na piersiach, – a już wieczność głoszę: Dzisiaj jest czyściec, – piekło było wczora, A jutro raj u wam nastanie pora – – – O posłuchanie was proszę.	The dark day, like a black nightmare Is still lying on my breast, – and I talk of eternity: Today is purgatory, – hell was yesterday, And tomorrow you will be in heaven – – – Please, listen to me.
Jeszcze się targam, bo we mnie się skarży Cała Europa! I we mnie podnosi Ku niebu ręce ludzkość kajdaniarzy –	I am still struggling because All of Europe is complaining in me! And in me it raises To heaven the hands of mankind in chains –

⁹ Aleksandra Szczepan makes such a juxtaposition in her text (she compares the first two stanzas of *Przedśpiew* from 1920 and 1978). Szczepan, 424. Szczepan accurately describes the direction of changes, discussing examples of different modifications, however, she only analyses fragments of texts (the first two stanzas) and omits intermediate links, i.e. fundamental changes that occurred between the first (1920) and the second (1927) editions. I, on the other hand, conduct a complete chronological analysis of all versions of the text, because only such a procedure may provide us with a complete picture. It should also be noted that the analysis of the first and the last version of *Przedśpiew* can be found in Jan Piotrowiak's article: Jan Piotrowiak, "W teatrze Jednego Widza. *Przedśpiew* Józefa Wittlina" [In the theater with one audience member: Józef Wittlin's *Przedśpiew*], in: *Znajomym gościńcem. Prace ofiarowane Profesorowi Ireneuszowi Opackiemu* [A Familiar Highway: Professor Ireneusz Opacki in memoriam], ed. Tadeusz Sławek, co-ed. Aleksander Nawarecki and Dariusz Pawelec (Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, 1993), 100–107. However, similar reservations should be made as regards both articles, by Aleksandra Szczepan and Jan Piotrowiak respectively.

¹⁰ Aleksandra Szczepan agrees: "However, the most powerful example of Wittlin's formal experiments is the poem *Przedśpiew*, which opens the volume." Szczepan, 424.

I klnie i krzyczy i wyje i prosi
I prosi, błaga i marzy – – –

And it swears and screams and howls and pleads
And it asks, begs and dreams – – –

Lecz potem dłonie wyciąga w zachwycie,
Gdyż nie na darmo tłuły o niebiosą,
Żebrząc o łaskę – – Patrzcie, a ujrzycie:
Już spada manna, już rzeźwi nas rosa
I słodzi, słodzi nam życie.¹¹

But then it extends its hands in delight,
For they did not knock on the heavens for nothing,
Begging for grace – – Look and you will see:
The manna is falling, the dew is refreshing us
And it sweetens, sweetens our life.

Marian Kisiel quotes the original version of the poem in his text, commenting insightfully that:

This is the first version of this poem. After all, there are three versions of *Przedśpiew*, each is more ascetic than the previous one, each, as Irena Maciejewska calls it, “modernizes the text and enhances its expressive, intellectual and artistic capacity.” The poem is in-between remembrance and hope, and also in-between the profane and the sacred. But the center of the world is focused on the lyrical “I.” In the “I,” “All of Europe is complaining.” In the “I,” “the hands of mankind in chains” are raised “to heaven” (I, 7), “the fists of mankind in chains” are raised “to heaven” (II, 23). The “I” is sometimes more important than the profane war drama, the hell of war, and the sacred, which gives nutritious “manna” and “refreshing dew.” The “I” acquires a symbolic meaning, and it is not at all clear who the “I” is.¹²

Zoya Yurieff thus describes the poem:

[...] A young and immature poet who neither can nor wants to restrain himself, violently expresses his feelings. “All of Europe” is complaining in his voice, “mankind in chains” raises its fists to heaven. He speaks not only in the name of his generation, but in the name of all mankind who have experienced the hell of war. As if struggling for breath, he says in *Przedśpiew*: [...]. The lyrical “I” is a former soldier. This lyrical mask is completely transparent in the light of Wittlin’s biography. The relief the soldier feels when he returns home makes him herald the dawn of a new era: [...].¹³

In my reading, this poem talks about an emotional singer, a nervous poet who wants to announce immediately what he has witnessed in order to preserve the memory of the war. “The scream of dying battalions” obviously refers to the victims of the Great War, and “collapsed thrones” are empires, especially the Austro-Hungarian empire (where Wittlin lived), whose collapse completely changed the political make-up of Europe. Unable to control his emotions, the traumatic memories of the war still vivid, he takes on the responsibility of saying the truth about the cruelty he witnessed. He has a lot to say. The text is a form of an introduction to his poetic testimony (as emphasized by the title – this poem opens the entire volume). The

¹¹ Józef Wittlin, “Przedśpiew”, in: *idem Hymny* (Poznań: Zdrój, 1920), 7. All versions of *Przedśpiew* are quoted in their original version. Punctuation, spelling and the layout of the text were not modified. All versions of the poem were translated into English by M.O.

¹² Marian Kisiel, “Poezja świadectwa. O »Hymnach« Józefa Wittlina” [Testimonial poetry: Józef Wittlin’s *Hymny*], in: *Studia o twórczości Józefa Wittlina* [Studies on Józef Wittlin’s works], ed. Ireneusz Opacki (Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, 1990), 20.

¹³ Yurieff, *Józef Wittlin*, 16.

“I” is the voice of Europe. Europe speaks through him – the “I” thus is a bard, a representative of a large community, of the entire continent, of the entire cultural formation. Importantly, the “I” levels accusations. Emotions are visible in the words, in the multiplication of verbs. The “I” emphasizes that he wishes to address the world as quickly as possible (“**And** I’m coming, I’m going, and I’m in a hurry;” rhetorical accumulation – three verbs express the same thing). The war has just ended (“still” is used as a refrain, as an anaphor; it emphasizes that the events are recent; moreover, it is very pictorial and sensual) and it must be described. The “I” describes poems as “crops” and “wonderful gifts.” Perhaps, they can save or comfort one, especially since “tomorrow you will be in heaven.” Moreover, the people are to be heard – as evidenced by the heavenly gift of manna.¹⁴

The second edition (Warsaw 1927)

Jeszcze jest we mnie krzyk ginących bataljonów,
I pamięć z trzaskiem rozwalonych tronów,
A już przybywam do Was, zadyszany,
Obładowany jukiem świeżych plonów.

The scream of dying battalions is still in me,
And memory of the sound of collapsed thrones,
And I’m coming to You, out of breath,
Loaded with bags of fresh crops.

Jeszcze mam w płucach gaz i proch, i pożar
Świata, co w gardle każde słowo dławi. – –
O jakże wielka jesteś, łasko boża,
Że przepłynąłem przez te krwawe morza
Do was, o ludzie łaskawi!

I still have gas and gunpowder in my lungs and fire
of a world that is choking every word in my throat.
– –God’s grace, how great you are!
That I crossed these bloody seas
And reached you, my gracious people!

Jeszcze mi czarny dzień, jak czarna zmora,
Leży na piersi, – a już zapominam!
Dzisiaj jest czyściec, piekło było wczoraj:
Trwajcie cierpliwie, trwajcie – do wieczora,
Bo jutro raj się zaczyna!

A dark day, like a black nightmare,
Is still lying on my chest, – and yet I forget!
Today is purgatory, hell was yesterday:
Be patient, hold on – until the evening,
Because heaven begins tomorrow!

Jeszcze się targam, BO WE MNIE SIĘ SKARŻY
CAŁA EUROPA! I we mnie podnosi
Pięści ku niebu – ludzkość kajdaniarzy,
Krzyżami wszystkich wojennych cmentarzy
Zrywa się, krzyczy i grozi!

I’m still struggling, BECAUSE ALL OF EUROPE IS
COMPLAINING IN ME! And in me it raises
To heaven the fists of mankind – in chains,
With crosses in all war cemeteries
It wrestles, screams and threatens!

Lecz jutro ręce wyciągnie w zachwycie:
Co nie nadarmo tłukły o niebiosą!
Bóg się zlitował! Patrzcie, a ujrzycie:
Już spada manna, już rzeźwi nas rosa
I słodzi – to gorzkie życie.¹⁵

But tomorrow it will extend its hands in delight:
They did not knock on the heavens for nothing!
God took pity! Look and you will see:
The manna is falling, the dew is refreshing us
And it sweetens – this bitter life.

¹⁴ Zoya Yurieff points out that the reference to the biblical manna is meant to be ironic.

¹⁵ Józef Wittlin, “Przedśpiew”, in: *idem, Hymny (wybór)* (Warsaw: Nakładem Księgarni F. Hoesicka, 1927), 9–10.

Apart from alerted versions of the poems, the second edition also contains an extensive author's note in which Józef Wittlin explains why he published his hymns for the second time:

Hymns were written in Lvov from 1918 to 1920 by a man who was not yet a writer. The first complete edition of *Hymns*, now out of print, was published in 1920 by "Zdrój" in Poznań.

This second edition, or rather a selection from *Hymns*, has been prepared by a writer. He shortened and polished many poems – he came to the conclusion that the secret of poetry is measure.

When I was writing these poems, I did not yet have my own desk, nor did I have any notion of style, or specified ambitions. However, I had direct, even too direct, contact with the raw material of poetry. *Hymns* were written *in articulo mortis*. That is why death is so prominent in them. That is why they talk about passion and God, and called God by name. Today, I'm not so close with God. Everyday life makes me more and more distant from God, just as everyday death brings me closer.

I noticed that these raw lumpy stanzas read more like a prayer than a free poetic play. In this edition, I have removed a number of poems: purely religious poems such as "Hymn nad hymnami" [Hymn of hymns] or poems that are too subjective, such as "Hymn niepokoju, obłądę i nudy" [Hymn to anxiety, madness and boredom]. I only publish here those hymns whose content corresponds to the form. I have also added two poems that were not in the first edition, even though they were written during the *Hymns* period.

From 1914 to 1918, one could still write about the soul. It was a time when human bodies suffered a lot. Today, fashion is changing. Today souls are bleeding, and our bodies are temporarily left alone. That is why writers today write about bodies, considering it insensitive to touch the soul with their words.

J. W.

Bolesławów, November 1926¹⁶

This version differs from the first edition significantly. The number of verbs in the third line has been reduced ("And I'm coming, I'm going, and I'm in a hurry" vs. "And I'm coming to You, out of breath"). The second stanza was completely changed. It mentions God's grace. Perhaps, it saved the "I" – the "I" was saved to tell people the truth about the war. The "heat of fires" disappears, the abyss of hell disappears, but the "I" lists something else – it is connected with the military and very vivid (especially in the context of the Great War): "gas and gunpowder and (...) fire." The "I" also mentions that he crossed bloody seas, which is evocative of the tragedy and bloodshed of war. There are changes in the third stanza as well: the dark day no longer lies "on the breast" but "on the chest." Paradoxically, it is also suggested that the "I," despite his traumatic experiences, begins to forget. The "I" still evokes paradise (in the revised edition), but the phrase "Please, listen to me" is missing. In the fourth stanza, we read about fists instead of hands (and the syntax is slightly altered), which undoubtedly strengthens the

¹⁶ Józef Wittlin, "Przedmowa do drugiego wydania" [Preface to the second edition], introduction to *idem*, *Hymny (wybór)* (Warsaw: Nakładem Księgarni F. Hoesicka, 1927), 7–8.

message. Instead of seven verbs (“And it swears and screams and howls and pleads/ And it asks, begs and dreams”), we read about crosses in war cemeteries and three verbs (“wrestles, screams and threatens!”). Crosses in war cemeteries are a very powerful symbol of wartime suffering and, above all, of death. “BECAUSE ALL OF EUROPE/ IS COMPLAINING IN ME!” is emphasized and written in capital letters (in the first edition, characters were expanded). In the final stanza, “then” was changed to “tomorrow,” while “for” was deleted. God was *expressis verbis* present. He took pity and sent people manna from heaven. The last line of the hymn is also changed: instead of life in general (without any adjective), we read about “bitter life.”

The third edition (Warsaw 1929)

Jeszcze jest we mnie krzyk ginących bataljonów
I pamięć z trzaskiem rozwalonych tronów,
A już przybywam do Was zadyszany,
Obładowany jukiem świeżych plonów.

The scream of dying battalions is still in me,
And memory of the sound of collapsed thrones,
And I’m coming to You, out of breath,
Loaded with bags of fresh crops.

Jeszcze mam w płucach gaz i proch i pożar
Świata, co w gardle każde słowo dławi, –
O jakże wielka jesteś łasko boża,
Że przepłynąłem przez te krwawe morza
Do Was, o ludzie łaskawi!

I still have gas and gunpowder in my lungs and fire
of a world that is choking every word in my throat.
–God’s grace, how great you are!
That I crossed these bloody seas
To reach You, my gracious people!

Jeszcze mi czarny dzień, jak czarna zmora,
Leży na piersi, – a już zapominam!
Dzisiaj jest czyściec, piekło było wczoraj:
Trwajcie cierpliwie, trwajcie do wieczora,
Bo jutro raj się zaczyna!

A dark day, like a black nightmare,
Is still lying on my chest, – and yet I forget!
Today is purgatory, hell was yesterday:
Be patient, hold on until the evening,
Because heaven begins tomorrow!

Jeszcze się targam, bo we mnie się skarży
Cała Europa! I we mnie podnosi
Pięści ku niebu – ludzkość kajdaniarzy,
Krzyżami wszystkich wojennych cmentarzy
Zrywa się, krzyczy i grozi!

I’m still struggling, because All of Europe is com-
plaining in me! And in me it raises
To heaven the fists of mankind – in chains,
With crosses in all war cemeteries
It wrestles, screams and threatens!

Lecz jutro ręce wyciągnie w zachwycie,
Co nienadarmo tłukły o niebiosą!
Bóg się zlitował! Patrzcie, a ujrzycie:
Już spada manna, już rzeźwi nas rosa
I słodzi – to gorzkie życie.¹⁷

But tomorrow it will extend its hands in delight:
They did not knock on the heavens for nothing!
God took pity! Look and you will see:
The manna is falling, the dew is refreshing us
And it sweetens – this bitter life.

Zoya Yurieff observes that “[t]he transition from a loud scream to a quiet intimate confession, almost a whisper, is the fundamental principle of arrangement in the third edition of *Hymns*

¹⁷ Józef Wittlin, “Przedśpiew”, in: *idem, Hymny* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo J. Mortkowicza, 1929), 5–6.

in 1929.”¹⁸ Kazimierz Nowosielski thus comments on the changes in the first stanza:

Ten years later, in the third edition, [Wittlin] added two significant lines:

I still have gas and gunpowder in my lungs and fire
of a world that is choking every word in my throat

“Still” was with him until the very end of his life. Ever since, it seemed to him that there was nothing left in him but internalized suffering that must be expressed and forever fought for – regardless of the cost. When Wittlin attempts to express his suffering, his most dramatic adventure with the self and poetical words begins.¹⁹

As I have already demonstrated, this change took place in the second, and not the third, edition of *Hymny*. Let us compare the versions from 1927 and 1929. They are almost identical: there are only slight modifications in terms of punctuation (pauses, commas), the spelling of “for nothing” is changed to “fornothing.” The words “because all of Europe/ is complaining in me” are again (it was also the case in the first edition) are written in expanded font and not capitalized, as was the case in the second edition.

The fourth (posthumous) edition

Jeszcze jest we mnie krzyk ginących batalionów
I pamięć z trzaskiem rozwalonych tronów.

The scream of dying battalions is still in me,
And memory of the sound of collapsed thrones,

Jeszcze mam w płucach gaz i proch, i pożar
Świata, co w gardle każde słowo dławi.

I still have gas and gunpowder in my lungs, and fire
of a world that is choking every word in my throat.

Jeszcze mi czarny dzień jak czarna zmora
Leży na piersi.

A dark day, like a black nightmare,
Is still lying on my chest.

Jeszcze się targam, bo we mnie się skarży
Cała Europa! I we mnie podnosi
Pięści ku niebu – ludzkość kajdaniarzy,
Krzyżami wszystkich wojennych cmentarzy
Krzyczy i grozi.

I’m still struggling, because All of Europe is complaining in me!
And in me it raises
To heaven the fists of mankind – in chains,
With crosses in all war cemeteries
It screams and threatens.

Lecz jutro ręce wyciągnie w zachwycie,
Gdyż nie na darmo tłukły o niebiosą:
Już spada manna, już rzeźwi nas rosa
I słodzi to gorzkie życie.²⁰

But tomorrow it will extend its hands in delight,
For they did not knock on the heavens for nothing:
The manna is falling, the dew is refreshing us
And it sweetens this bitter life.

Before I analyze this version, I will briefly discuss the history behind Józef Wittlin’s “poetic testament,” i.e. *Poezje* with Julian Rogoziński’s preface published in 1978 and 1981, and

¹⁸ Yurieff, *Józef Wittlin*, 16.

¹⁹ Nowosielski, “Hiobowe wołanie Józefa Wittlina”, 24.

²⁰ Józef Wittlin, “Przedśpiew”, in: *idem, Poezje*, preface by Julian Rogoziński (Warsaw: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1981), 23.

Wybór poezji [Selected poems] edited by Wojciech Ligęza published in 1998.²¹ It is explained in the editor's note in Rogoziński's edition that:

The author selected the poems in this collection. He was also in charge of the layout and editing. The author added to *Hymny*, which were published in three pre-war editions (Poznań 1920, Warsaw 1927 and 1929), *Psalm* published in "Pamiętnik Warszawski [Warsaw Diary] in 1931. This selection, edited by Halina Wittlinowa, also includes works she found in her husband's posthumous writings; these are: *Wniebowstąpienie roku 1958* [Ascension of 1958], *Poeta emigracyjny* [Poet in emigration], and *Postscriptum do mojego życia* [Postscript to my life].²²

However, the original plan was completely different. An anthology of Józef Wittlin's poetry, entitled *Kontrabanda* [Contraband], was to be published by *Kultura* as a second installment of Wittlin's émigré writings series. The collection of essays *Orfeusz w piekle XX wieku* [Orpheus in the hell of the twentieth century] was published first. Dynamic publishing plans are discussed in letters exchanged by Józef Wittlin and Jerzy Giedroyc, the editor of *Kultura*.²³ On the other hand, in letters to Tola and Tymon Terlecki, Halina Wittlin writes about her plans to publish her husband's works in communist Poland, including the said anthology of poetry.²⁴

The undoubted advantage of this version of *Przedśpiew* is the condensation of meanings in a limited textual space.²⁵ First of all, let us focus on the endings of the third, fourth and fifth stanzas: they are short (in relation to the other lines) and thus expressive, creating a powerful climax at the end of the stanzas (the end of the fifth stanza did not change much in comparison with the third edition). It seems that such "broken" and shorter final lines are equally, or even more, effective as numerous exclamations in the first edition. It renders the text more modern. Such an interpretation is essentially in line with Irena Maciejewska's observations, which I quoted at the beginning of my article. The language of is less melodramatic, a far

²¹ "The most important part of this collection of poems by Józef Wittlin, entitled *Poezje*, is that the author selected the poems himself before his death. The first and only Polish edition, which also contains poems added by the poet's wife, Halina Wittlinowa, was published in 1978 by Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy. This edition is the same as 'the poet's poetical testament.' [...] The appendix, added and edited by Zygmunt Kubiak, Wojciech Ligęza and Elżbieta Wittlin-Lipton, presents the reader with the first edition of *Hymny* (1920) and translations from *Przyjaźnie poetyckie Józefa Wittlina* [Józef Wittlin's poetical friendships], edited by Zygmunt Kubiak, Warsaw 1995. [...] Fragments of manuscripts donated by Elżbieta Wittlin-Lipton are included at the end: a handwritten note from the poet's final days, a dedication on a copy of the *Odyssey* given to Edwin Citron, the poem *Pamięci Jerzego Paczkowskiego* [In memory of Jerzy Paczkowski] and a handwritten note-poem found in the hospital by Józef Wittlin's bed after his death." "Od wydawcy" [Publisher's note], in: Józef Wittlin, *Wybór poezji*, preface and biographical note by Wojciech Ligęza, (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1998), 237–238.

²² "Od wydawcy" [Publisher's note], in: Józef Wittlin, *Poezje*, preface by Julian Rogoziński (Warsaw: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1981), 151.

²³ "In 1960, it will be 40 years since my first book, the collection of poems *Hymny*, was published by the Hulewicz family in Poznań. Although the book received critical acclaim and had a great impact in its time, the younger generation, both in Poland and abroad, is no longer familiar with it. Therefore, I believe that the book *Orfeusz w piekle XX wieku* [Orpheus in the hell of the twentieth century] (about 400 pages) should be published first, and then a volume of poems entitled *Kontrabanda* [Contraband] (about 200 pages)." Józef Wittlin's letter to Jerzy Giedroyc dated May 11, 1959, in Jerzy Giedroyc, *Józef Wittlin, Listy 1947–1976* [Letters 1947–1976], ed. Rafał Habielski, Paweł Kądziała (Warsaw: 2017), 276. The details of the project are discussed in other letters.

²⁴ See Halina Wittlin's letters to Tymon Terlecki published in: Tymon Terlecki, *Józef Wittlin, Listy 1944–1976* [Letters 1944–1976], ed. Nina Taylor-Terlecka (Warsaw: Towarzystwo "Więź", 2014), 342 (signing a contract for *Wybór poezji*), 346 (sending Wittlin's testament to PIW), 357 (receiving the book), 359 (Jerzy Giedroyc's initial plans to publish the poems), 375 (signing a contract for the second edition).

²⁵ Irena Maciejewska, to whom I have referred before, wrote about condensation in relation to the entire volume.

cry from the first edition, which was a highly emotional and urgent statement. This version is endowed with a new quality. Indeed, it expresses virtually the same message, albeit with fewer words. The greatest modification pertains to the number of lines: many were deleted and those that remain are almost identical with the second and the third edition. The phrase “because All of Europe/ is complaining in me” is not emphasized in the layout, as was the case in previous editions. In the final stanza, the author also returns to the concept he originally introduced in the first edition: the manna that is falling from heaven is not explicitly associated with God, as was the case in the second and third editions.

Hymns – conclusion

The main conclusion from the analysis of the four versions of the poem is the realization that Józef Wittlin’s *Hymny* should be edited and published in accordance with the principles of genetic criticism of printed texts. Unfortunately, we do not know whether any manuscripts and typescripts of *Hymny* exist, so the genetic edition would ultimately include poems that were published in different editions (if the manuscripts or typescripts were found, their transcripts should of course be included in the edition).²⁶ This notwithstanding, there are many arguments in favor of such an editorial project. First of all, more readers would have access to Józef Wittlin’s works. Only the third edition has been digitalized. Other editions are not often included in library collections (it seems that *Poezje* edited by Julian Rogoziński, where the fourth version of *Przedśpiew* was published, seems to be the most popular, both as regards bookshops and libraries; this is probably due to the fact that this edition had a large circulation). A critical genetic edition of *Hymny* would document and demonstrate the dynamics of Józef Wittlin’s work and the direction of changes introduced by him. All other editions present *Hymny* in a static form, relying on only one version of the text. Readers who only have access to the so-called “final” version and are not familiar with Wittlin’s works may be led to believe that there is no history behind it – that is, that no other version exists. It would be worse still if scholars were led to believe that. Therefore, the respective versions should be presented in a chronological order.²⁷ Undoubtedly, the hundredth anniversary of the first edition of *Hymny* in 2020 should be commemorated and the role played by Józef Wittlin in the history of twentieth-century Polish literature should be acknowledged. Unfortunately, the critical discourse does not reflect that. Indeed, the most recent edition of Wittlin’s poetry was published in 1998, i.e. more than 20 years ago. A critical (model) genetic edition of *Hymny* could also constitute an invaluable source for future literary scholars interested in Wittlin’s

²⁶ Małgorzata Wichowska (the curator at the Manuscripts Department of the Adam Mickiewicz Museum of Literature in Warsaw) and Elżbieta Wittlin-Lipton informed me that Wittlin’s daughter has a copy of the third edition of *Hymny* with the author’s and his wife’s handwritten corrections. This version was probably used to prepare the final edition. Unfortunately, I have not seen it. Hopefully, however, this important genetic document will be included in my analysis in the future.

²⁷ I discovered Wittlin as a poet, starting with his “posthumous testament” (Ligeża’s and Rogoziński’s editions, mainly because I attended Professor Wojciech Ligeża’s classes), through the third and the first editions, and ending with the second edition. I knew the final result and I made my way back to the starting point, which, of course, was also an interesting research perspective. It seems, however, that the chronological order is more natural. Unless, taking into account the so-called authorial intent, we include the final version at the beginning, in order to show the gradual descent into the depths, towards the foundations of the final version, i.e. to the first edition of *Hymny*. But such a solution also imposes a certain interpretation and may violate the principle of equality of all versions of the text.

works, also in the field of comparative studies. Respectively, all out-of-print pre-war editions would be published in a single volume. The only reservation concerns authorial intent, i.e. the fact that Józef Wittlin's poetic will, which Julian Rogoziński discussed so emotionally in his preface, would not be honored.²⁸ It seems, however, that this objection may be refuted. A critical genetic edition of *Hymny* would certainly contribute to our knowledge of Józef Wittlin's works. It should be noted that Wojciech Ligęza's edition of *Hymny* contained more poems than Rogoziński's edition and the poet's daughter, the heir to his legacy, approved. Therefore, texts from three editions of *Hymny* and from *Poezje* (edited by Julian Rogoziński) / *Wybór poezji* (edited Wojciech Ligęza) could be published in a single volume on a par with one another. The reader would decide which version of *Hymny* is the "best." It is true that in this case one could speak of "improving the work," as commonly discussed in the literature on the subject. However, I believe that such a perspective, although it is consistent with the opinions of historians and critics and clearly reflects authorial intention, would help readers interpret Wittlin's poems in a critical genetic edition. Indeed, the possibility of looking at texts from many different perspectives and angles would be invaluable. In keeping with the principles of genetic criticism, all versions of the text would be equally relevant.²⁹ A critical genetic edition of Wittlin's poems would also demonstrate that historical poetics should analyze stylistic changes in a given edition as a function of broader stylistic changes in twentieth-century Polish poetry. Such an edition would explain the history behind *Hymny* (the primal context) and would also include illustrations and an extensive editor's note.

Salt of the Earth

Naturally, Józef Wittlin did not only write *Hymny*, but also the outstanding novel *Salt of the Earth*, the first part of a planned trilogy that has been translated into several languages. The writer worked on it for 10 years.³⁰ Fortunately, the manuscripts of some parts of the novel have survived. They allow us to reconstruct, at least to a small extent, the pre-text. Zofia Starowieyska-Morstinowa mentions these notebooks in her text:

After all the wartime shifts, relocations and discards, I found in my papers a large black cardboard notebook: the last draft of the last part of *Salt of the Earth*. [...] I browsed through this notebook with emotion. I don't know if I've ever seen more changes and deletions in a draft. Looking at the

²⁸ Julian Rogoziński opens his preface with the following statement: "Józef Wittlin had selected the poems before he passed away. Therefore, this anthology is the poet's testament – and whoever would try to extend or limit it according to their own (even amicable) preferences would violate the will of the late poet." Julian Rogoziński, "O poezji Józefa Wittlina" [On Józef Wittlin's poetry], preface to Józef Wittlin, *Poezje*, preface by Julian Rogoziński (Warsaw: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1981), 5. In a footnote, Rogoziński adds: "Only people who were very close to the poet could introduce any changes; indeed, Halina Wittlinowa added a few poems that she considered vital in the context of her husband's *oeuvre*. But she only delicately retouched the poet's 'self-portrait'." Rogoziński. Therefore, it would be a good idea if a critical genetic edition was approved by the poet's daughter, Elżbieta Wittlin-Lipton.

²⁹ Professor Stanisław Jaworski, a pioneer of genetic criticism in Poland, was also interested in this aspect: "He was interested in, as he believed, a problem that was not as popular in (especially Polish) genetic publications: he studied texts that, for different reasons, were modified by the author after publication." Mateusz Antoniuk, "Piszę, więc jestem.... Profesor Stanisław Jaworski i krytyka genetyczna" [I write, therefore I am ... Professor Stanisław Jaworski and genetic criticism], *Ruch Literacki* vol. 5 (2018): 514.

³⁰ Wittlin began working on the novel in 1925, and he finished it in 1935. He discusses the socio-political conditions in which he had to work in: Józef Wittlin, "Postscriptum do »Soli ziemi« po 35 latach" [Postscript to *Salt of the earth* after 35 years,] *Kultura* no. 3 (1971): 138–141.

fragments that are not crossed out, I can see how only a small part of what Wittlin wrote in the morning in Świącice was included in the book, how many things were later rejected. These deleted fragments and pages, all those hardly legible notes, should be deciphered and analyzed. Maybe some scholar will study them one day. It is in the deleted fragments of the text that we discover the abundance of flora and fauna that must be present in the writer's soul in order for this simple and strange being to be created: a book. I look with tenderness at the embryo of this unusual, though simple, book called *Salt of the Earth*.³¹

This quote speaks for itself. This manuscript is waiting to be analyzed. Its thorough analysis – including a transcript and a comparison with the printed version – should provide us with a lot of interesting information about the history of this outstanding novel.³² Unfortunately, I do not know what became of the remaining parts of the manuscript. The history of Wittlin's genetic *dossier* is at times tragic. The drafts of the second and third part of the trilogy were lost on June 22, 1940, during the Second World War, when the Wittlin family tried, and eventually failed, to get on a ship from France (Saint-Jean-de-Luz) to England. As the writer's daughter, Elżbieta Wittlin-Lipton, recalls in her book:

The crowd thronged around us, people screamed to get closer to the rickety boats. In this confusion, a feverish Polish soldier, to the horror of my parents, grabbed one (maybe two) of my father's leather suitcases and threw the luggage into the water, shouting that "excess baggage is not allowed." My father's detailed notes and sketches for the next installment of the *Powieść o cierpliwym piechurze* [The Patient Walker] trilogy, of which *Salt of the Earth* was only one part, were in this suitcase (or suitcases).³³

Fragments of the second part of the novel were published in *Kultura* in 1972.³⁴

Raptus Europae, letters, notebooks

It should be noted that Józef Wittlin's archive is much more than what I have focused on in this article. Ewa Wielgosz lists numerous unpublished works in her doctoral dissertation.³⁵ She has also discussed *Raptus Europae*,³⁶ the writer's handwritten notes, which were made with a view to writing a book dedicated to Elżbieta Wittlin, in her article. Unfortunately, this book was never published. Wielgosz observes in her article:

³¹ Zofia Starowieyska-Morstinowa, "Mój przyjaciel Wittlin" [My friend Wittlin], in: *eadem, Ci, których spotykałam* [The people I have met] (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Archidiecezji Warszawskiej, 1993), 104–105.

³² Małgorzata Wichowska informed me that the manuscript of chapter 9 and half of chapter 8 of *Salt of the earth* have survived to this day.

³³ Elżbieta Wittlin-Lipton, *From one day to another: A fashion reportage in a period of conflict* (Madrid: Ediciones Facta, 2011), 132

³⁴ Józef Wittlin, "Zdrowa śmierć" [Healthy death], *Kultura* no. 7–8 (1972): 75–92.

³⁵ Ewa Wielgosz, *Twórczość literacka i faktograficzna Józefa Wittlina* [Józef Wittlin's fiction and non-fiction texts], (Ph.D. thesis, The University of Rzeszów, 2014).

³⁶ Ewa Wielgosz, "»Raptus Europae. Dziennik« Józefa Wittlina" [Raptus Europae: Józef Wittlin's diary], *Pamiętnik Literacki* vol. 1 (2017): 149–164. According to Elżbieta Wittlin-Lipton, it was rather an outline of a book dedicated to her by her father. In conversations with me, the writer's daughter indicates the need to publish this text, and she also provided me with a transcript of the manuscript.

Despite these declarations, Wittlin left a “diary,” which has not yet been published. The daily entries are now available in manuscripts, typescripts, and also in a digital version. They had been made since the 1920s until Wittlin’s death. As far as prose is concerned, we can find among them: a fragment of the manuscript of *Salt of the Earth*, notes for the second part and the draft of the third part of *Powieść o cierpliwym piechurze*, and the concept for the entire trilogy, notes for quasi-autobiographical novels: the “Jewish” novel about Lvov *Aniołowie pokoju / Cudzoziemiec* [Angels of the world / Foreigner] as well as ideas for other novels and short stories (*Dżungla* [Jungle], *Frak* [Tail-coat], *Łazarz* [Lazarus], *Opowieść o nieczystym sumieniu, czyli Ballada głodowa* [A tale of an unclean conscience or a hunger ballad], *Struna* [String]). As far as poetry and drama are concerned: draft of published poems and drafts of unfinished poems, notes and a fragment of the draft of the drama *Barabasz* [Barabbas]. In addition, there are notes from six trips to Europe in the years 1964-1969, as well drafts of travel essays, notes for autobiographical texts: *Raptus Europae*, *Koty* [Cats], *Survivor*, *St. Frigidaire* and *Riverdale*, original versions of published and unfinished essays, letters to Zofia Starowieyska-Morstinowa, personal comments, sociological and psychological observations about émigré circles and lists of telephone numbers and contact information.³⁷

Indeed, these materials constitute an invaluable source for genetic analysis of Wittlin’s texts.³⁸ It seems that “diary entries” mentioned by Wielgosz are notebooks, which Ryszard Zajączkowski also discusses in his text:

We have to remember that the majority of Wittlin’s texts are handwritten. His stays in France, Spain and Portugal (1939-1940) resulted in an unpublished collection of essays *Raptus Europa*. The Houghton Library has the writer’s diary (journal?) – it will be made available in 2026 – fifty years after Wittlin’s death. From the 1920s to the 1960s, Wittlin had also made notes in notebooks, which, like the *Raptus Europa* manuscript, are kept at the Museum of Literature in Warsaw and to which I refer in my text. These notebooks were not meant to be published; they were rather a kind of an intimate journal. Wittlin comments on his poetry, plans his essays, and records his memories and observations. They cover almost fifty years and read almost like a diary. The writer documented his personal views in them and described the people he met and the situations he encountered. These hybrid sketches, devoid of compositional coherence, are somewhat reminiscent of Aleksander Wat’s *Dziennik bez samogłosek* [Diary without vowels] or the opening fragments of Jan Lechoń’s *Dziennik* [Diary] and refer to the tradition of Edmond and Jules Goncourt’s, André Gide’s and Samuel Peyps’s intimate diary. The form has influenced the vision of the world and the communicative situation inscribed in them. Their analysis may bring a better understanding of Wittlin’s works and views.³⁹

³⁷ Wielgosz, 150–151.

³⁸ The Józef Wittlin archive is kept at Adam Mickiewicz Museum of Literature in Warsaw. The catalog is being prepared: *Katalog rękopisów Muzeum Literatury im. A. Mickiewicza w Warszawie* [Manuscript catalog at Adam Mickiewicz Museum of Literature in Warsaw], ed. T. Januszewski, vol. 2 *Poezja polska XX w.* [Twentieth-century Polish poetry] (Warsaw: Muzeum Literatury im. Adama Mickiewicza, 2002), 311–345.

³⁹ Ryszard Zajączkowski, “Wolne usta poety. Ethos słowa Józefa Wittlina” [The poet’s right to speak: Józef Wittlin’s ethos of the word], *Ethos. Kwartalnik Instytutu Jana Pawła II* no. 1–2 (2012): 266.

Zajączkowski further observes in a footnote:

There are one hundred and twenty-one pocket notebooks. Language roams free in them. They are also a very interesting testimony to the writer's spiritual growth and an intimate commentary on his works and the events of the twentieth century, especially in Poland and the United States. They were made available a few years ago and they provide a crucial context for understanding the writer's work and views.⁴⁰

Interestingly, in other texts, probably in reference to the same collection of notebooks, Zajączkowski writes about 134 notebooks. Moreover, their reference number also changes, from 1701⁴¹ to 1704.⁴² Undoubtedly, this matter requires clarification, and the notebooks should be subjected to a detailed analysis.

Józef Wittlin's private letters, currently edited and published, should also be discussed. Ryszard Zajączkowski observes that:

At the Houghton Library at Harvard University, there are, among others, letters written to J. Wittlin after the war by 370 senders. There are almost no copies of Wittlin's letters in the archive. Their number is impressive. The writer corresponded regularly with Mieczysław Grydzewski, Witold Gombrowicz, Jerzy Giedroyc, Zygmunt Haupt, Hermann Kesten, Jan Winczakiewicz, and Kazimierz Wierzyński. Relatively small but important collections of letters exchanged with Czesław Miłosz, Stanisław Vincenz, Jerzy Stempowski or Roman Brandstaeter are also important.⁴³

Analyzing Wittlin's *oeuvre*, Zajączkowski also points to other unpublished works, such as: manuscripts of reviews of theater plays⁴⁴ or "literary talks delivered at RWE (about 70 texts). They are kept at the J. Wittlin archives at the Piłsudski Institute in New York." Zajączkowski again mentions "(134) pocket notebooks and notebooks kept at the Museum of Literature in Warsaw."⁴⁵ Zajączkowski analyzed these documents and wrote the following articles (where he included quotes from the notebooks): *Wolne usta poety. Ethos słowa Józefa Wittlina* [The poet's

⁴⁰ Zajączkowski.

⁴¹ Zajączkowski, 262.

⁴² Ryszard Zajączkowski, "Nienapisany esej. Ameryka w archiwalnych zapiskach Józefa Wittlina" [Unwritten essay: America in Józef Wittlin's archival notes], in: *Literatura polska na obczyźnie – zapomniane dziedzictwo po roku 1939* [Polish literature in exile - the forgotten heritage after 1939], ed. Ryszard Zajączkowski (Lublin 2017), 22.

⁴³ Ryszard Zajączkowski, "Literatura i życie. O współpracy Józefa Wittlina z Walterem Landauerem i o tłumaczeniach »Soli ziemi«" [Literature and life: The cooperation between Józef Wittlin and Walter Landauer and the translations of *Salt of the earth*], *Pamiętnik Literacki* vol. 1 (2016): 201.

⁴⁴ Ryszard Zajączkowski, "Pamiętnik wygnańca. Z nieznannej korespondencji Józefa Wittlina" [Diary of an exile: From Józef Wittlin's unknown letters], *Ruch Literacki* no. 4–5 (2014): 485.

⁴⁵ Zajączkowski. Zajączkowski also mentions the notebooks when he writes about Józef Wittlin's view of the United States: "If someone ever writes Wittlin's biography, he will also have to refer to 134 pocket notebooks, which are almost completely unexplored, covering the period from the 1920s to the 1960s. The writer recorded in them his personal thoughts, comments on current events, ideas for works, travel records, etc. They are also a very interesting testimony to Wittlin's spiritual evolution and an intimate commentary on his works and the events of the twentieth century, especially in Poland and the United States." Ryszard Zajączkowski, "Józef Wittlin – na szlakach ucieczki i ocalenia" [Józef Wittlin – on the escape and rescue routes], *Pamiętnik Literacki* vol. 1 (2018): 215.

right to speak: Józef Wittlin's ethos of the word], *Józef Wittlin – nierozpoznany chrześcijanin* [Józef Wittlin: An unrecognized Christian] and *Nienapisany esej. Ameryka w archiwalnych zapiskach Józefa Wittlina* [Unwritten essay: America in Józef Wittlin's archival notes]. However, these materials were never transcribed and published in their entirety.

Conclusion

These examples clearly show that a genetic analysis of Józef Wittlin's work is very productive. The writer left behind a rich *oeuvre*. However, in order to fully acknowledge this, we have to look beyond the texts published during his lifetime (i.e. poems, essays and one novel). We also have to acknowledge the existence of an impressive collection of letters (scattered all over the world), notebooks and private notes, although, of course, that is not to suggest that it is quantity, and not quality, of writing that matters. Although various scholars postulate, rightly so, that Wittlin's archival legacy should be published, especially his letters, unfortunately no one argues that genetic criticism should be employed in such a project.

I am convinced that the study of Józef Wittlin's works in the methodological framework of genetic criticism will provide us with many new findings as well as contribute to the dynamically developing genetic studies in Poland.

translated by Małgorzata Olsza

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KEYWORDS

Hymny

POETRY

genetic criticism

ABSTRACT:

In the present article, I analyze four versions of the poem *Przedśpiew* [Prelude], which opens Józef Wittlin's collection of poems entitled *Hymny* [Hymns], and discuss significant changes within the respective editions, pointing to the research potential of such an analysis. I also postulate that *Hymny* should be edited and published in accordance with the rules of genetic criticism of printed texts. I also demonstrate how genetic criticism may be applied to the works of Józef Wittlin in my discussion of a fragment of the manuscript of the novel *Salt of the Earth*. Thus, I both introduce and outline the future critical perspectives of genetic criticism.

Józef Wittlin

Salt of the Earth

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A Study into One Metaphor

c r i t i c s :
Barbara Kaszowska-Wandor, *Res publica (post) litteraria. Od poetyki wspólnoty do postliteratury*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 2020.

In her book, Barbara Kaszowska-Wandor quotes Edward Balcerzan, an intellectual patron of *Forum of Poetics* and a teacher of one of the journal's founders:

The shapes of the phenomenon perceived as 'literature' are transforming – in the transformations of the human world, its culture and civilization, as well as in subsequent scholarly doctrines. Its textual representation is changing – transforming the internal relations of the system. Literature happens, processes, creates, dies, reactivates its archaic being, it forgets and unforgets itself. Scholarly comments addressing those processes are possibly the most difficult duty of literature scholars, and only a few deal with that phenomenon¹.

As if in answer to that allusion-challenge, in her book Kaszowska-Wandor deals with the riskiest, most difficult questions concerning the most basic terms and notions used by literary scholars in their everyday work. A study into a specific metaphor, the "literary republic", provokes her to consider such basic issues as the role of literature in community building, mechanisms of creating reality by literature, that reality's ontology, ways of shaping collective memory by literature, and many more.

¹ Edward Balcerzan, *Literackość: modele, gradacje, eksperymenty* [Literocity: models, gradations, experiments] (Toruń: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Mikołaja Kopernika, 2013), 149; quoted after: Barbara Kaszowska-Wandor, *Res publica (post) litteraria. Od poetyki wspólnoty do postliteratury* [from poetics of community to postliterature] (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 2020), 134–35.

That thematic variety of Kaszowska-Wandor's book results from the rigorous philological discipline to which she subjected her argumentation. Each time she discusses a term that interests her, she reaches for linguistic prehistory. It should be stressed that the quality of her etymological studies is frankly humbling. When analyzing the meaning of the terms she discusses and reconstructing the context in which their first definitions were articulated, she is vigilant not only towards reports that shaped their common understanding, but also she verifies canonical translations of antique and medieval texts. When she is convinced that some shade of meaning of a term was lost in translation, or – even worse – that there was some mistake, she rejects it and works on the Greek or Latin original.

She considers the Pythagorean school as the first “literary community”, “philosophical community”, “scholarly community”, whose ideas are reconstructed mostly on the basis of neoplatonic texts from the 3rd century A.D. The analysis of the conception that emerges from that reception, of a community of students surrounding a master, and a philological review of such basic terms as “community” or “republic”, allow the author to prove their unbreakable connection with such terms as “virtue”, “happiness”, “wisdom”, or finally “philosophy” organizing the whole history of European thought.

However, a philological, “close” reading of specific texts is not the only method used by Kaszowska-Wandor. She also refers to Franc Moretti and his concept of distant reading, focused not on the semantic contents of a specific text, but rather on situating it in broader contexts.

Decisions to take on a “closer” or “farther” perspective are made each time with a lot of awareness depending on which approach may be cognitively better in a given case. That methodological flexibility is also a tool that allows the author to maintain consistency of argumentation characterized by a huge variety in terms of discipline and material. Kaszowska-Wandor does not hesitate to take advantage of anthropology, sociology, psychoanalysis, and even (in the final part of the book) mathematics. When choosing philosophical and literary texts to analyze she does not limit herself by geography or chronology, incorporating Aristotle, Cicero, Quintilian, Erasmus of Rotterdam, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Friedrich Schiller, Thomas Bernhard, Jürgen Habermas, and Winfried George Sebald. Given the multi-layered character of the book, Kaszowska-Wandor cannot be accused of digressiveness. It is a centuries-long discussion of the metaphor of a literary community which she successfully deconstructs; the topic has attracted the attention of great humanists, who otherwise seem to be so distant from one another.

The complex, yet neatly arranged method on which *Res publica (post) litteraria* is based can be described with the aesthetics term of anamorphosis, to which the author gives a lot of attention in her book, and which proves to be a functional tool for describing a sort of literature. According to the author, the technique of painting pictures in such a way as to make them show different objects depending on the perspective has been more than a tool for attracting the recipient's attention and a proof of the artist's skill since the 18th century. Anamorphosis can be a tool for cognition:

In the 18th century anamorphosis attracted mostly the attention of Minimites, among whom we can find the most famous mathematicians of the time, such as Jean-François Nicéron. They are not

just authors of anamorphic representations, but also of theoretical works, in which they describe the technique of creating such paintings. They believe that what interests them the most about anamorphosis are not optical tricks and illusions. As Baltrušaitis and Jay remind us, in geometry and cartography anamorphosis is a tool for testing the correctness of representation. Paradoxically it does not question the correctness of what we see, but allows us to achieve it, by correcting imprecisions².

This is how I understand her vigilance towards the accepted ways of reading canonical texts and understanding philosophical ideas. Having at her disposal an impressive list of source literature, the author does not task herself with writing a complete essay – instead, she seeks an unobvious perspective, which would allow to extract from the topic something that has been long unnoticed and throw a new light on it. It seems that this is the source of the rhythm of the argumentation, in which suspended questions return after several dozen pages in a new context and look different due to new methodological assumptions.

Kaszowska-Wandor's discussion of the 15th century text by Ermolao Barbaro, Bishop of Verona, is the most vivid example of the effectiveness of her tool, which can also serve as an illustration of the method developed in the book. In the text, the bishop brutally attacks lay poetry, which he considers to be "harmful to the state and weakening the moral strength of society"³. He sees it as inferior to other liberal arts, and literary fiction, a tool for satisfying vanity and the desire for fame provided by Satan.

Kaszowska-Wandor notices the dissonance between that unequivocal pamphlet on poetry and the whole persona of the priest. He was the brother of the distinguished humanist Francesco Barbaro, fluent in Latin and Greek, and translated *Aesop's Fables* at the age of 12. Knowing that the philological reading of the discussed text cannot change its meaning in any way, the author analyzes it from some distance and places it in the broader context of discussions concerning early Italian humanism. Its Venetian variety was determined by complete financial dependence on the representatives of major aristocratic houses that ruled the republic. Scholars indicate that the vast majority of the texts written then were self-advertisement of a sort, to help the author find a patron. In those texts, beliefs, ideas, and philosophical concepts were not the most important elements, as their major goal was to flatter a potential patron. Hence according to Kaszowska-Wandor, it is hard to blame Ermolao Barbaro for failing to see the center of spiritual and intellectual development of man in lay humanism:

A very likely hypothesis can be proposed here, which would have to be verified by scholars who deal with Barbaro's writings. I consider his text to be a protest against not only Florentian neoplatonism, but also Venetian humanism. Did not his violent protest against the absolutism of literary means of expression and accepting literature to be the community's binder result to a great extent from the negative experience of humanist clientelism? As a representative of one of the most important Venetian families he had to be fully aware how those humanist texts were created, who commissioned them, and whose interests they represented. [...]

² Kaszowska-Wandor, *Res publica (post) litteraria. Od poetyki wspólnoty do postlitteratury*, 292.

³ Kaszowska-Wandor, 162.

Perhaps none realizes the fact that literature is an earthly, human thing, and that identifying it with theology is not just dangerous, but is in fact a blasphemy, better than the Venetian bishop. We can clearly see what a misunderstanding it is to consider Barbaro's voice to be an expression of scholastic fear of a new culture. Quite to the contrary: that voice remains perhaps even more aware of the practical consequences of making humanist poetics a community similar to a lay religion⁴.

A moment later, when discussing *Letters upon the Aesthetic Education of Man* by Schiller, the author goes in the opposite direction. Noticing distortions in their reception and making a diagnosis that they have been generally reduced to a collection of maxims deprived of context, she decides to reread them on her own, closely and from a philological perspective.

The combination of methodological creativity with a traditional, philological meticulousness and reliability makes *Res publica (post) litteraria* a book which is able to make a very strong impact on the contemporary discussion of the social impact of literature. The scholar convincingly demonstrates that the metaphor she discusses is one of the key notions, and that without understanding it, it is impossible to successfully investigate many topics which appear in contemporary discussions of humanist topics. According to the author, any questions concerning the political correctness of a text, its involvement in education, its relationships with ethics, and its general ability to (co)shape the reality are reduced to the basic question: if and what kind of community is created by people who read and write literature. For this reason, Kaszowska-Wandor's book, whose title may at first seem narrow and concrete, should be read by any literature scholar who wants to consider the most general questions related to the theory and philosophy of literature.

translated by Paulina Zagórska

⁴ Kaszowska-Wandor, 166.

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KEYWORDS

HUMANISM

POLITICS OF LITERATURE

literary community

ABSTRACT:

The paper reviews Barbara Kaszkowska-Wandor's book *Res publica (post) literaria. Od poetyki wspólnoty do postliteratury*. The study into the etymology of the metaphor of the "literary republic" leads the author to consider fundamental questions concerning the role of literature in shaping communities and the ways in which literature impacts political reality. The author's erudition and bold methodological solutions allow her to answer those questions – often old and considered to be unanswerable – in an original, unobvious way.

poetics

HISTORY OF IDEA

literary ethics

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