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# THE AUTHORIAL POETICS. ZYGSMUNT HAUPT (I): INSPIRATIONS AND INTERPRETATIONS

Interpretations of Haupt works are embedded in varied methodological and critical frameworks; they were inspired by different “turns” that have taken place in the humanities and by a reflection on the use of new methodological tools that could complement more traditional approaches.

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# The authorial poetics. Zygmunt Haupt (I): Inspirations and interpretations

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*Zygmunt Haupt and his works were rediscovered by the Polish reader over thirty years ago. Such rediscoveries may be described as movable yet recurrent feasts. Indeed, the most important works written by Haupt were published only between 1997 and 2022: first Pierścień z papieru [The Paper Ring]; then two editions of collected stories entitled Baskijski diabeł [The Basque Devil]; two editions of Z Roksołanii [From Red Ruthenia], a collection of essays, journalistic pieces, and reportages; and finally letters (exchanged with Jerzy Giedroyc and the writers and thinkers associated with “Kultura” [Culture] as well as the editors of “Wiadomości” [News] and “Tematy” [Themes]). Since 1990, more and more critical studies have been published, including sketches, essays, and monographs devoted (in part or in whole) to the biography and the works of the author of “Deszcz” [The Rain], i.e., books by Aleksander Madyda, Andrzej Niewiadomski, Paweł Panas, Jagoda Wierzejska, Dorota Utracka, and Marek Zaleski. We must also mention “Festiwal im. Zygmunta” [Zygmunt Festival] which has been taking place in Gorlice every year since 2015. Also, two conferences were devoted specifically to Haupt and his works. The conference Zygmunt Haupt. Powrót pisarza [Zygmunt Haupt. The return of the writer] took place in Kazimierz Dolny in 2017 (post-conference proceedings were published in Jestem bardzo niefortunnym wyborem... Studia i szkice o twórczości Zygmunta Haupta [I am a very unfortunate choice... Studies and sketches on Zygmunt Haupt's works], ed. A. Niewiadomski, P. Panas, Lublin 2019) and the conference Zygmunt Haupt. Warsztat pisarski – inspiracje – konteksty [Zygmunt Haupt. Poetics and style – inspirations – contexts] took place in Poznań in 2021. The conference in Poznań inspired two special issues of Forum of Poetics, the current one and the next one, which will also be published in 2023.*

*Even a cursory glance at the criticism and the reception of Haupt's works in Poland after 1989 confirms the originality and significance of the writer's artistic achievements. The more editions of both primary and secondary sources we have, the more inspirations and impulses for further research and (re)interpretations we receive. Scholars who took part in the conference in Poznań in 2021 quickly realized that the conference in Kazimierz Dolny did not “summarize” the discussion devoted to Haupt and his works; on the contrary, it opened up new perspectives. It became clear that Haupt's works must be*

*further analyzed; scholars should move beyond old approaches, and either complement them or engage in a critical dialogue with them. Haupt should be read anew and seen in a different interpretative light.*

*Articles published in the first of the two special issues of Forum of Poetics devoted to Haupt offer interpretations which are embedded in varied methodological and critical frameworks; they were inspired by different “turns” that have taken place in the humanities and by a reflection on the use of new methodological tools that could complement more traditional approaches. The goal was to show Haupt in “close-up,” to focus on details, and to notice connections that were at times imperceptible, and sometimes even risky. Indeed, articles published in this issue of Forum of Poetics are an important and ingenious contribution to Hauptology and to the study of the poetics of a single author as such.*

*The first two essays address the question of Haupt’s self-awareness as a writer (which was profound though not ostentatious) and they, in fact, attempt to map new theoretical trajectories in Hauptology, e.g., as regards the methodology of reading Haupt’s prose. Andrzej Niewiadomski investigates how Haupt translates the geographical and political concept of the border into the language of axiology, epistemology, interpersonal experience, and writing technique. Tomasz Mizerkiewicz, in turn, studies Haupt’s self-referential remarks pertaining to description in the wider context of the contemporary “descriptive turn.” It turns out that philosophical trends related to the study of description helped Haupt strengthen his descriptions – he recorded a passing moment or a momentary “contact” with reality.*

*The next two articles are micrological analyzes of Haupt’s short masterpiece – the short story “Deszcz” [The Rain]. Agnieszka Czyżak focuses on Haupt’s specific literary strategies and the ethical dimension of the story, which inspires reflections on the human condition in the world of unstable values. Adrian Gleń, respectively, compares “Deszcz” with Robert Walser’s “Little Snow Landscape” and argues that the short stories reveal an anti-essential vision of the world which both authors shared. An important critical context is provided by the works of the French philosopher, Hellenist, and Sinologist François Jullien, who studied the indefinite.*

*Jan Zieliński is interested in the painterly and the musical, double narration, and the (illusory) suggestion of the autobiographical in Haupt’s works. He compares Haupt’s works with the works of Andrzej Bobkowski and discusses the underlying contradiction between Haupt’s anarchist tendencies and his desire to achieve artistic perfection. The next two essays also examine internal tensions in Haupt’s works; an important point of reference for both texts is the notion of memory, which constitutes an important theme in Hauptology. Christian Zehnder expands the “epiphanic” reading of Haupt’s prose by incorporating the perspective of geopoetics. He emphasizes the role of exuberant details of the lost Galician world, which stem from what is remembered as seemingly monolithic and absolute. Antoni Zajac, respectively, works with Victoria Nelson’s notion of psychotopography, that is a dynamic projection of subjective experiences, memories, and fantasies onto the space of the represented world. Haupt’s lost Galician world returns in Marek Wilczyński’s essay. Wilczyński examines how Haupt comments on and represents the annihilation of the ethnically, religiously, and linguistically diverse communities of Galicia and Podolia in his short stories.*

*Last but not least, Tomasz Garbol discusses how Haupt’s works exemplify the high modernist trend of believing in “poetic faith,” in the quality of artistic experience, instead of religious faith.* |

# Border, contour, fragment – Haupt's strolls between the world, the other, utopia and text

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Forgetting for a moment what we know about various contexts and interpretations of Haupt's work – the body of literature on Haupt is constantly growing – let us turn to the sources of his prose. However, not in the sense of early works, sources of inspirations and borrowings; the last short stories from the only volume published when Haupt was still alive leads us towards images and events from earliest childhood, like a reversed autobiography. Although those memories are extracted from the depths of memory with some difficulty, there is a clear observation at the very beginning:

Not much reached us from that side of the **perimeter**. There was the Austrian **border**, so **on this side** there were finances, and **on the other side** of the Zbrucz – *soldat* with a spear. In Russia the military worked as **border** guards, something like KOP [Corp of Borderlands Protection – PZ]. But then the war came and it was all to become somewhat **blurred**. So first of all, the names of towns and cities ran closer. Before, there were only Wołoczyska and Podwołoczyska, but now there is also Żmerynka, and Wapniarka, and Winnica, and Kamieniec Podolski, and Płoskirów. But **that country** remained **that country**, and **here** was **here**. **Here** was Jagielnica and Probużna, and

Skąła, and Borszczów, and Ułaszkwice, where I was born. Where I spent the earliest years of my childhood (BD 427, highlights by me, A.N.)<sup>1</sup>.

This opening suggests that borders and borderability were categories which first of all, shaped Haupt's worldview, and secondly, are forever connected with spatial vividness of differentiating, the division into "here" and "there", "mine/ours" and "someone's/nobody's". There is more to those dichotomies: although in both cases Haupt characterizes spaces using the names of local towns and villages, but only when he describes the foreign land does he stress its linguistic (and dynamic) character through the phrase "the names of towns and cities ran closer", whereas what is "here" seems to be more physical and tangible. The rigid, partitionist border remains in consciousness despite later changes, despite marching armies (which often appear in Haupt's prose) and traumatic, personal war experiences. Podolia is occupied by the Russian army, an alien world taking over the intimate, closest surroundings; moreover, there is a comment concerning the definiteness and permanence of borderlands delimitations, "it was all to become somewhat **blurred**" (highlight mine, A.N.). We thus know that the border type was significant for the original shape of Haupt's identity idea— something classified as "formal, physiographical" by geographers, assuming that there are also "natural" borders (such as the Zbrucz), as every single border is a product of the human mind<sup>2</sup>. Additionally, the border indicated by Haupt is linear, complex and permanent, rather than zonal, simple, and changeable. It is thus an exceptionally distinctive marker, which is moreover related to civilizational divisions in Haupt's prose. What is mine/ours is on the western side of the "perimeter", and "there" is on the eastern side.

In *Z Roksolanii* [From Roksolania] Haupt revisits this issue, trying to define the territory of "here" – one he could identify with, but this will always be limited to shifts in the civilizational barrier between the West and the East, rather than drawing a detailed map of the area that interests him. However, this does not mean undermining its relatively constant status, as a border – according to geographical definitions – is "a line or zone which separates fragments of space within a defined period of time", or more generally: "it is a geometrical form (a line or zone) which conventionally separates fragments of spacetime from one another"<sup>3</sup>. However, although explorers and conquerors of the eastern territories of the First Polish Republic could not specify the borders, "they did not look at what was under their feet, they imagined some «Ultima Thule»" (ZR 140), the "strangers" who represented the upcoming modernity established clear borders – even if some were unjust, not taking into consideration linguistic or national nuances. Haupt mentions de Beauplan's maps, the Curzon line, but the border from the fragment cited above has a similar character: first partitionist, then separating the Second Polish Republic from Russia. However, it illustrates a different way of thinking about borders, from before the scientific, military, and political precision; borders treated as a zone, limes, frontier or borderlands, which – similarly

<sup>1</sup> All quotes are from the following editions of Haupt's prose: Zygmunt Haupt, *Baskijski diabeł. Opowiadania i reportaże* [Basque devil. Short stories and reportages], edited by Aleksander Madyda, introduction by Andrzej Stasiuk (Wołowiec: Wydawnictwo Czarne, 2016), henceforth BD; Zygmunt Haupt, *Z Roksolanii, Opowiadania, eseje, reportaże, publicystyka, warianty, fragmenty (1935–1975)* [From Roksolania. Short stories, essays, reportages, articles, variants, fragments], edited by Aleksander Madyda (Toruń: Wydawnictwo UMK, 2018), henceforth ZR. Quotes from Haupt's texts from Stanford University archives (Zygmunt Haupt papers, M0356. Dept. of Special Collections, Stanford University Libraries, Stanford, Calif.) are marked as ZHP, with catalogue location.

<sup>2</sup> See Jerzy Bański, "Granica w badaniach geograficznych – definicja i próby klasyfikacji" [Border in geographical studies – definitions and classifications], *Przegląd Geograficzny* vol. 4 (2010): 503.

<sup>3</sup> Bański, 492.

to the Roman frontiers – protect from “foreigners” and serve as a passage between the world of different civilizations<sup>4</sup>, contrary to a sharp cut associated with “boundaries” or “borders”<sup>5</sup>. However, there is no doubt that the east border of Haupt’s homeland is precise, and many of his works reveal the basis of this precision related to his disillusionment with the world “on the other side”: in *Z Roksolanii*, *Lutnia* [Lute], *Perekotypołe*, *Coup de grâce*, *Meldunek o nieprzybyciu Wełnowskiego* [Report on Wełnowski’s non-arrival], *Balon* [Balloon] Haupt creates the linguistic reality of “that country” as a world that can be conceptualized through categories proposed by Koneczny, Halecki and Huntington. At the same time there is no intermediate zone, the eastern border seen like this would resemble other geographical definitions, according to which e.g. it is “a vertical surface crossing a border delineated on the ground, separating the territory of one state from other states or no-man’s areas”, or even introduce visual elements to the definition, such as “an imagined curtain separating states and no-man’s areas”<sup>6</sup>.

At first glance, the world of Haupt’s protagonist is clearly separated from what is foreign, but only apparently separated from other “own”, specific areas from Roksolania: Żółkiew, Lviv, Zaborze, Gorgany, Stryj. But how to delineate this area if this protagonist, while travelling west, notes his presence in borderland areas, e.g. “where the ethnographic Lemko language can be heard even in Beskid Wyspowy” (BD 257), and “chładowski land belongs to the area of the ethnic borderland”, where the border is elusive because it **“meanders somewhere”** (BD 467, highlight mine, A.N.), or observes that the “podbeskidzki piece of Dzikie Pola” (ZR 131) exists in the reality of People’s Poland? On the one hand, he clearly juxtaposes the remnants of “a small fragment of latyczowski district left on the west side” (ZR 123) with other parts of Poland, writing that its architecture does not correspond with the Polish landscape, and on the other hand – he is unwilling to delineate the west borders of this piece of land. And so he transfers the border zone concept, characteristic for historical Polish understanding of space, which allows the interpenetration of Polish and Russian (in the historical sense of this word) elements.

<sup>4</sup> Haupt’s note about the Peace of Riga is interesting in this context: “Professor-prime minister dictating the Soviets peace conditions in 1920 gave up the «cordoned» Podolia with Kamieniec offered to him by the Soviet delegation. But the contemporary Polish military saved a strategic, 40-kilometer-wide belt from the Jagiellonian Eastern borderlands, east from Lida, Baranowicze, Łuniniec, Równe railroad, hence the shape of the Polesie border. Had Podolia been «cordoned» as part of interwar Poland, then perhaps the escaping Soviet tanks would not have even reached the Zbrucz in September, and this may have changed that war’s outcome. What-if’s, what-if’s...” (ZHP, box 10, folder 10). Haupt’s geopolitical consciousness was influenced by geographical politics which was developing dynamically (mostly in Central and Eastern Europe) from early 20th century to the interwar period. Maciej Górny offers an interesting perspective in *Kreślarze ojczyzn. Geografowie i granice międzywojennej Europy* [Mapmakers of motherlands. Geographers and borders of interwar Europe] (Warszawa: IH PAN, 2017). For a discussion of Haupt’s idea of borders in spite of temporary political interests, see Michał Klimecki, “Granica na Zbruczu 1918-1939 r.” [The Zbrucz border], in *Granice i świat współczesny* [Borders and contemporary world], edited by Zbigniew Karpus, Beata Stachowiak (Toruń: Wydawnictwo UMK, 2010).

<sup>5</sup> See John Robert Victor Prescott, *Political Frontiers and Boundaries* (London: Routledge Library, 1987), 1–57. Prescott introduces significant differentiations, explaining that borderlands are not the same as borders, simultaneously signaling the presence of internal “borderlands”. In this context, the term “boundaries” would be closer to the “cordoned” reality from Haupt’s short story. A clearer conceptualization of this issue can be found in Hastings Donnan, Thomas M. Wilson, *Borders: Frontiers of Identity, Nation and State*, translated into Polish by Małgorzata Grajper-Głowacka (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 2007), in which the authors, referring to e.g. Prescott, propose a different terminological practice: border is associated with countries, frontier – with borderlands, and boundaries – with material and social determinants of borderlands. Referring to Ladis Kristof, they stress the significant difference between boundary and frontiers (Donnan, Wilson, 71, 73). As a result we are dealing with a clear-cut division: on the one hand there are formal terms (border), on the other – the borderlands area (frontier), and the term boundary is the broadest, it refers to many types of social boundaries with a material-spatial character, as well as to social and symbolic boundaries imagined by individuals and groups (Donnan, Wilson, 37).

<sup>6</sup> Bański, 491.



However, this perspective has its limits, which materializes in one of Haupt's short stories: the Zbąszyń train station, located at the border, where the protagonist arrives from his trip to Paris. During his train journey he notes, similarly to the case of the cordoned reality, the names of places located between France and Poland: "Already after one day there was Charleroi, then Aachen, Essen, Hamm, Stendal – a foreign country" (BD 226)<sup>7</sup>. For Haupt's protagonist, the country's border – modeled after the first one he experienced – is always a clear barrier, which is also connected with entering subsequent stages-areas of life. Haupt scrupulously notes each and every time it is crossed, his thoughts circulate around such facts and keep returning to them. This is also the case with his episode from the September Campaign (an internment camp in Hungary, when the border is crossed "at a loss and with bitterness", BD 680), trips to the Polish army in France (an episode from *Baskijski diabeł*), evacuation to England<sup>8</sup>, additionally connected to the first encounter with "a new element", or in the case of crossing the Atlantic to go to Louisiana. Subsequent borders on the way to the West move him further away from his homeland, and going east is impossible, with one exception from before the war, i.e. returning from Paris to "arcadia"<sup>9</sup>; as if that protagonist "bounced off" the impassable barrier on the Zbrucz, of which he had been aware since early childhood.

Curiously, while moving west, despite the visible, linear, precise borders, Haupt creates buffer zones which help deal with survival trauma and highlight the fact that all the places visited by the protagonist finds belong to the same civilizational area – just as when Haupt was tracing relations between different Polish regions. This is the role played by the sea, territories of Hungary, (the former) Yugoslavia, Italy and France on the way to the Anglo-Saxon world. Even the tragedy of leaving the homeland is modeled by the awareness of shared space on both sides of the Carpathian Mountains, created thanks to "our Ukrainian Piedmonteses" (ZR 342)<sup>10</sup>. The barrier separating the West from the East, its chaos and anarchist-totalitarian societies, is the only impassable border, a frontline. Hence in his early prose (with a subtitle "a didactic story") Haupt creates uhlán Czuchnowski, originally a man without a past. Facts "**partitioning**" his life are not a barrier that would protect him from "dullness". Only after serving at the border (both Polish and Scottish) is he radically transformed. Czuchnowski, crossing also the Polish-Hungarian border in Rachov, is aware that a different frontier is more important: "He was guarding good from evil. He served most selflessly" (BD 187). That axiological element is almost the same as the topographic determinants of the border. And whenever it is impossible, we are dealing with anxiety stemming from the lack of borders, with invasion of the elements which introduce disorder in the spacetime established in the protagonist's mind thanks to borders.

<sup>7</sup> This foreignness is also related to the presence of swastikas on chimneys. In the pre-war reportage *Aspekt Śląska* [Silesia's aspect] Haupt clearly notes the character of the autonomous Silesia – borderland, and in connection with the Polish-German conflict.

<sup>8</sup> *W drodze na morzu* [En route by the sea] and *Kawaler z morskiej pianki* [Bachelor from sea foam] showcase the cartographic-geometric type of imagination in border creation: "The distant sea shore already seems like dead, uninhabited land, oblique rocks of St-Jean-de-Luz, all similar in their smoothness and inclination, resemble a geometrical solid, mathematical walls" (BD 168); "Regardless of how you look at it, there is land here, drought, solid land, and further away, on the other side, the flat sea starts, running away – moving, leaking, distant sea. [...] Lines running like hypsometric layers, the sea approaches them, drooling like an infant. And this is where this line of dirt comes from" (BD 388).

<sup>9</sup> Haupt's travels from after the war were not reflected in any of his literary and paraliterary works.

<sup>10</sup> Haupt writes that "nothing has been known about it" (ZR 342) [i.e. Transcarpathia], but simultaneously provides information which shows that this is not true. Ukrainians, portrayed differently on different stages of Haupt's career, are classified as the West here. It is significant that the two initial paragraphs cited at the beginning of this paper were translated into Ukrainian by Haupt (ZHP, box 10, folder 10).

*W Paryżu i w arkadii* [In Paris and in arcadia] is the perfect example of such a mechanism. Both spaces – Parisian and Polish – are seen in the context of chaos; street advertisements in Paris, the rhythm with which they appear in memory resembles marching Great War armies. Disorder of the metropolis and disorder of the war do not allow to define the area observed by the protagonist. In the short story, moving round Paris is presented through a series of randomly listed places, whereas the events of the war are taking place in some unnamed space of an Eastern borderlands town and its area, which are not idyllic, compromising its “arcadian” character. “The town seems to have shrunk”, “as if looked at through flipped binoculars, there is a sense of calmness and sadness” (BD 224). But Paris can be tamed as well. Unlike in *W Paryżu i w arkadii*, in *Fluctuat nec mergitur* Haupt opens with precisely delineated borders of the area that interests him:

Paris is shaped elliptically. Avenue des Champs-Élysées, rue de Rivoli, rue de Faubourg St-Antoine comprise its long axis, with a short, perpendicular axis: boulevard Sebastopol and boulevard St-Michel. Boulevards surrounding the center, La Cité, are elliptical concentric rings. On the west there is Bois de Boulogne, on the east – the Vincennes forest. On the north Montmartre, and on the south – Montparnasse. We will not get lost (BD 651).

The text, concentrated on the dynamics and chaos of the Parisian lifestyle, closes the image of Paris’s “borders, *octroi*” (the latter are internal customs offices which functioned in Paris up until 1948). Haupt’s description seals the area which – even if we treat the rules of modern urban planning dogmatically – has a strong inclination towards fluid transformation into suburbia. In reference to the Polish space, portrayed similarly as a reality of contrasts, the same literary device can be found in the form of Żółkwia’s tollgates (as well as its walls, an additional separating factor) – a city that used to be perfect, and whose streets are now covered in sewage. It seems that delineating borders of each area within some civilizational unity constitutes a remedy to vagueness, anonymity, and chaos. Everywhere he goes, Haupt’s protagonist no longer draws a line separating two worlds, but a border that would give a specific shape, outline, contour of the reality that is being experienced, starting from a fragment of one of his “Parisian” stories about the need to familiarize oneself with the area within a 20-kilometer radius in order to comfortably function within it. Haupt’s internal borders constitute the formula of specifying everything that is “here”, what is within the perceptive capabilities of a subject that learns about the world through their senses. This is why in Haupt’s prose we are dealing with constant drawing of “small” borders, and it is not predominantly in the metaphorical sense, with marking the area of “separated” houses, woods, hunting areas, estates, farmlands, tollgates, the order of their districts and worlds (*To ja sam jestem Emmą Bovary* [I am Emma Bovary]), “separate” villages (such as Łosie), closed spaces of gardens (*Ogród Jezuicki* [Jesuit garden], *Rigor mortis*).

When Haupt shifts the focus to the earliest Podolia memories, he also shows how difficult it is to organize space based on clear delimitation. Despite that vagueness capitulates, even if it is expressed in a cut ellipsis which concludes the paragraph. Grammatically this sentence is the equivalent of the spacious frontier; the infinity of language – just as the infinity of landscape – is cut short:

It is incredibly difficult to understand the topography of that region, the area of Czarnokoniec. Until today I have an impression of an endless plane, but the memory of those steep ravine walls,

a small chapel at the feet of shale rocks, with a stream flowing from under its threshold, an amazing impression of full, green summer (BD 40).

The ravine walls are a border of that plane, further reinforced by the town of Probużna, “the capital and Metropolic for forty kilometers around”.

In Haupt’s prose the process of distinguishing and separating smaller areas starts at the beginning of his mature works. It is connected to his attempts at delineating the frontier remembered from childhood, and thus he tries to “manufacture its definition” (BD 573). Subsequent images of that country, as if “glued” to the civilizational border and mockingly dubbed as *Arschhöhle* by Austrian officers allow not only to see its contour and “internal” richness, but also to form a significant directive of literary work:

One has to separate oneself from that space, as if it was not difficult and impossible, to say to oneself: here is here, and there is there. To be an objective master to oneself. To segregate, but not systematically, as once can get lost in those systems created systems’ sake, but to divide and to say that things are different (BD 575).

And so the separation actions undertaken by Haupt have a local character, and at the same time they help escape from the traps of modernity which make everything look the same. It is not about efforts to put everything in order, which seems impossible due to the limits to individual spatial experience, nor is it about creating autonomous fragments of the world in such a way as to make them reflect some unobtainable whole – it is about “making things different”, i.e. confronting their specificities with one another, and thus about proving the unobtainable, unobvious integrity of a bordered territory of a range which is difficult to imagine.

Such actions can be found throughout Haupt’s works, they transform into an obsession – not visible at first glance, but intensely present – with distinguishing, separating, loneliness, which concerns both people and objects. A city house “separate and lonely like a gloomy rock in shallow sea water” (BD197), a seaside house from another short story is “abandoned”, “pushed away” (BD 415), people – always separate and mysterious. When Haupt characterizes the world of individual characters, he does it in a way that resembles how he characterizes space, he isolates individuals and creates “laboratory” conditions for studying them:

I would like to work on them one by one, select, pull them out from the mass and the crowd. Take a good look, throw some light on them to see what they are really like. Enough generalizing, collective thinking and seeing! Take them one by one, as if each one were unique, to see for myself that indeed they are unique specimens. The same as this one, and that one. A truly separate person, truly the only one (BD 565).

There is an apparent contradiction in this declaration. The other is the same, and yet separate, standing out, specific. Haupt uses a device resembling his attempts at characterizing specific spaces when, while describing what is foreign, he often reaches for analogies with the familial. If, while writing about the relationship between self and the other, he asks the

fundamental question: “Where is the line between myself and the other?” (BD 567), this question is extended to “where is the line between myself and the world, of which the other is an autonomous particle?”. Just as space is cognizable only in a specific dimension of areas that can be delineated, a small town in the Eastern borderlands where the protagonist arrives (significantly) for a geodetic internship, and scrupulously measures fragments of its space, as well as social, national, and religious groups in order to isolate one person, the titular “Emma Bovary”, confronting her alleged way of perceiving reality with his own, Haupt singles out individuals from the abyss of modern mass, and portrays them in detail. Haupt’s “here is here, and there is there” has at least two dimensions; one concerns the physical space and experiencing it at its source, whereas the other one is an attempt at drawing the line between self and everything external to it<sup>11</sup>. It is characteristic that both forms of demarcations can be found in initial and final parts of *Fragmenty*, respectively. But although the categorical character of formal borders dividing space raises no doubts, those dividing self from the world are sometimes questioned in this prose – but it seems that only in order to highlight their necessity even further. When Haupt writes in the final parts that “One time I will be one with the whole, and another time I will be alone, completely alone, nothing else will matter, only me. I will feel as if the world and I were one” (BD 440), he goes from a blurred identity to a delineated, defined one: “the world and I are the same” does not mean being lost in the abyss of reality, but, to the contrary, singling self out from the mass of phenomena.

“Separate from space” – this is much easier for Haupt’s protagonist than drawing a line between his own and the other’s self-awareness; it even seems that Haupt makes a certain effort by signaling the possibility of a shared territory of two people, antagonized against everything beyond this utopian unity, in his love stories<sup>12</sup>. However, there is a significant doubt related to that, which tips the scales and makes Haupt’s protagonist’s existence a chain of activities leading to establishing borders. The laconic “But why persuade, invent, multiply – you are here by yourself” appears in the context of emotional engagement, repeated in a similar form and separated in the text: “But why lie, make up – you are here by yourself” (BD 525). A love story is an exposition of an individual perspective rather than an expression of a perfect unity of two people. On its margin, Haupt will develop his half-poetic theory about the sky as the only space connecting individuals:

the only thing they have in common is the sky, stars, clouds. Everything else: planes, grasslands, hills, mountains, cliffs, seas, rivers, all that crust, so varied, scum, all those pits, bulges, abysses, plants, soils, swamps, wetlands, tundra, forests, woods, dunes, deltas, limans, all these “reliefs”

<sup>11</sup>Haupt introduces further divisions here, within self, in many places highlighting the segmental character of the protagonist’s existence, e.g. writing about the seven-year metabolic cycle, or stressing “separated” experiences – what is interesting, also related to territorial divisions of “own” space from foreign space, e.g. “A very isolated memory of that, because I am far away from my place, a memory very cut out, separate like an amateur snapshot glued on a page in a photo album. A few amateur days of life spent separately” (BD 259).

<sup>12</sup>See e.g. “It is wonderful and delightful, and separately on the court’s rectangle cut off from the world with a net, one can forget about everything, the world is left on the other side, and here only the two of us, and **nothing** and **nobody** else, locked in the geometrical rectangle and us, only us, and the rest – as if cut off with a knife. It does not matter; it does not exist. This isolation is artificial, but accidentally it helps and brings satisfaction” (BD 266, highlights mine, A.N.). Or: “And so here in Maruszka’s arms I forgot about the world piling up, as if it was not there, [...] here it was only us, and there the world was rubbish, tall-told [...]” (BD 293).

and “floras”, damn it! everything so varied, momentarily seems so foreign and distant, and overseas to someone used to their own. And it is enough to raise your head, look at the vast sky, familiar to everyone and shared by everyone (BD 524).

We should also notice that Haupt, who had vast general knowledge, especially about the natural environment, must have known that the sky looks different depending on the latitude. This reference is probably supposed to create another differentiating figure, to draw another border. At first it may seem like a demarcation line between immanence and transcendence (a perfect relationship of two people contains a transcendent element); this is supported by the variant of the already cited opening of *Fragmenty*, in which Haupt establishes borders as a significant element of his own perception of the world:

Right behind the fence there was the railway embankment. For the first time I had seen the horizon lifted and pressed evenly on the sky. A peculiar world, not forgotten, a mathematical straight line separating the solid earth from the sky. The thick line of tracks cut in the sky, sharply, separating. It seemed like it had been going on since the beginning of the world. It was in the evening, one without a sunset, fire, and light, in some strange garden, and that evening that hard line of the railway track, cutting off the length, diversity, solidity, familiarity of the world from the sky, atomized, scattered, misty-spacious, cloudy and evening (ZHP, box 9, folder 4).

Thereby the vision of the sky as a meeting place with the other is deconstructed. Earth can be systematized, or at least divided according to the topographic and natural variety, the sky is characterized by a series of epithets suggesting an incognizable abyss. Haupt is clearly attached to immanence, as this is the territory where he is able to delineate areas that can be described. Perhaps the cited fragment did not make it to the final version due to the fact, that it stresses the barrier separating immanence and transcendence too obviously, it relies on a schematic, symbolic division<sup>13</sup>. However, in Haupt’s works what is related to the “solidness” of earth does not enjoy the status of a safe world either. Just as the sky disperses borders, it is a “scattered” and simultaneously unified reality, the human reality can sink into entropy; Haupt starts the short story opening his first planned collection of prose with a threat of entropy. In order to avert it, differences need to be articulated. Hence “my country is a country of four seasons” (BD 22), and the spatiotemporal borders related to times and places become delimitation lines of the text’s fragments, the last one about the escape of two people running away from the implied, ravishing idyll of the sky. And so the world of borders is suspended between two undifferentiated spaces, and although one may be associated with a utopian “paradise”, and the other one is a consequence of social and civilizational transformations, they both take the form of anti-utopia precisely because they leave no place for creative activity that would differentiate and delineate.

<sup>13</sup>Those symbolic senses are further reinforced by one more element: the tracks function as a borderline, and the final sentences of the cited fragment are: “And then a train passed, a goods train, with tufts of steam, smoke, and exhaust fumes stuck to it. With all the solidness of boxes of cargo cars against the background of the sky, exaggerated out of earthly proportions, in the rattle and metallic clangor of bumpers and chains. A train, spotted in the evening, for the first time from the backyard of someone else’s house...”. Being “out of earthly proportions” and at the same time “against the background of the sky” suggests moving along the border rather than across it, attachment to the border as a connecting rather than dividing factor.

The reality of entropy appears one more time, in the short story *Warianty* [Variants], published around the same time as *Fragmenty*, where Haupt articulates his directive of the necessity to “separate self from space”, and where he writes: “There are no two identical things in the world” (BD 572). This brings us back to the claim that in Haupt’s works borders and frontiers are source experiences, and at the same time a category which describes his creative strategy well. In the early stages of his mature writing it takes another form, whose presence has been implied here. In the fuller version of *Stypa* [Funeral reception] published alongside *Fragmenty* and *Warianty* in 1950, which also refers to childhood memories, a father explains to his son where the place name Batiatycze comes from; it is a story about a Cossack granted an estate as a reward for finding king Sobieski, who got lost in the woods. Sobieski allegedly declared that:

he can claim as much land from these woods as he manages to encircle riding on a horse within a day. As soon as he heard that, the Cossack took a horse for himself, and a pack horse for a gleep with bags full of poles for marking the border, and gee up! And they would stop every so often, and the Cossack would yell: “Batia! Tyczy!”<sup>14</sup>, and his assistant would place a pole in the ground. And this is where the name Batiatycze comes from (BD 727).

The authenticity of those events is doubtful. The protagonist explains to himself, that since this is not real life, it has to be art, as life does not comply with the rules of composition. And at the same time he states: “I was afraid of being forced by art” (BD 727). What he likely means by that is being forced to compose events, to put together fragments and variants, and thus also to establish borders, a heroic activity which prevents from being lost in the entropic chaos, or in the paradise unity of objects and people. According to the story, the place got its name from the activity of demarcating a border. In Haupt’s world delimitation simultaneously limits physical space and creates it. However, identifying the line between “life” and literary fiction seems to be more important here. Using his geodetic knowledge, Haupt writes that life is not “function material” or “a type of nomogram”. And wherever something made up appears, dividing tools need to be used; it needs to be organized regardless of how skeptical we are about such activities. But in some way “life” is similar to art, despite the tangible barrier between them – its existence provokes copying it in literature.

As can be seen, various ways of understanding borders are present in the early stages of Haupt’s mature works. Starting from lines dividing physical space, at the same time investigating the border between self and everything else, between the reality of diversity and (unreality) of anti-utopias, and finally: between the world and a text. It may thus be said that in an attempt at establishing the framework for Haupt’s geopoetics, we are moving from the geo-zone to poiesis<sup>15</sup>. It may also be said that the four types of basic delimitations which appear in

<sup>14</sup>Wordplay – “Batia” is the assistant’s name, and “tyczy” is the archaic imperative form of “wytyczać”, i.e. to demarcate [PZ].

<sup>15</sup>Haupt’s prose proves that Rybicka, who tries to precisely articulate the place of two spheres in the geopoetics discourse, is correct: the «geo» zone is not only the subject and product of literary and cultural poietic practices. «Geo» can be the same driving force as poiesis” (Elżbieta Rybicka, *Geopoetyka. Przestrzeń i miejsce we współczesnych teoriach i praktykach literackich* [Geopoetics. Space and place in contemporary literary theories and practices] [Kraków: Universitas, 2014], 93).

Haupt's short stories provoke further divisions, on both sides of demarcation lines, with one exception: the penultimate case, in which neither transcendence nor entropy allow to impose internal borders on self. And the remaining demarcation lines prove a reduced sense of the existence of the Whole through a peculiar symmetry related to the ability to delineate borders in one's homeland and in a foreign country, stages of one's own existence and social barriers, limited perspectives of playing specific roles in life, and constructing textual anecdotes.

Actually all those borders can be found in *Fragmenty*. The Zbrucz soon becomes a line separating the first five years of the protagonist's childhood from the rest of his life ("five years of small life separated and cut off in memory"), which are called "detached small pieces" (one of them, not included in the final draft, tells us about the impassable line between earth and sky), and – as we soon find out – they are not an obstacle in establishing a frontier separating it (already fragmented) from the diversity of the world presented in the titular textual "fragments".

In many works by Haupt it is possible to trace the process of establishing and at the same time crossing borders; they only seem to be contradictory. Haupt noted in the margins of a characteristic of his own work that "being a poet means crossing the line" (ZR 166), it means carrying "one's privileges" "across all cordons" – but this transgressive movement of imagination is only possible in a world with borders, where they are delineated by the "poet" himself. Perhaps the secret of his literature lies in the impossibility to breach only one cordon: the one separating immanence from transcendence. "Why was man placed between two extreme sadnesses-fears? Claustrophobia and agoraphobia. The fear of confinement and the fear of space. Which one is worse?" (ZR 349) – asks Haupt in his unfinished short story. However, it should be mentioned that normally confinement does not cause any suffering for Haupt's protagonists, and they are able to tame open space through dividing it with borders. Therefore "agoraphobia" concerns the abyss of chaos or (in a reversed perspective of looking) – the abyss of the sky.

Haupt's borders – physical, existing on maps, as well as imagined by him – almost directly translate into the process of text fragmentation, which consists of genetically diverse areas, such as descriptions, anecdotes, characteristics, comments (always referring to a locum). All of them are ready-to-use elements, building blocks for constructing the countries of Haupt's short stories. It is a finite repertoire which he operates so skillfully that he cannot be accused of schematism. In other words, he "dresses" obsessively recurring themes in the robes of spatial categories, in which borders play the key role. Finally, let us trace those devices in Haupt's writing technique, variants of one unfinished story, which – just as *Fragmenty* – opens with an image of a river separating different territories.

Three short fragments of (most likely) one, planned short story, with a recurring image of the Bug as a river separating two worlds, can be found in Haupt's archive. The most elaborate one is the beginning of a story about the protagonist's Sunday trip with three companions undergoing military training "to Kodeń [in order to] see the miraculous image of Madonna Kodeńska" (ZR 335). In the first parts of the text the protagonist is mostly interested in the proving range, located "between the Bug and the Muchawiec in a gore created by the two rivers, crossed by two roads leading to Brześć" (ZR 332). In the other two short variants we see

the Bug upon Krystynopol and Sokal; in the former only the very existence of the river dividing two banks is highlighted, and in the latter, confronted with the motif of a ruined bridge, puts the alleged theme of an unfinished story to the fore:

Love is like a shattered bridge.

Of course what I mean is tragic, unfulfilled love – because this is the only true love (ZHP, box 9, folder 8).

Paradoxically, we are able to say the least about the thematic dominant feature of the longest preserved fragment; we do not know whether the horse ride to Kodeń is supposed to be treated as a pretext, or whether Haupt was going to focus on the related anecdote. Such a loose attitude to factuality and moving events and characters to turn them into a background for very different, seemingly unrelated worldview constructions<sup>16</sup> is common in Haupt's prose. Based on the presence of specific protagonists (Emil Milowicz, Księżycki, Góralczyk) and military exercises it is likely that the two variants were written around the same time as *Lili Marleen* in which the motif of ethnic frontier is also highlighted – probably in late 1960s. In the longest one Haupt writes:

That proving range was located where a few lands met: to the east, Polesie, to the south Wołyń, and on the other side, ethnographically cut clean by the river, Podlasie with its inhabitants – definitely Poles (ZR 333).

Thee proving range, situated so specifically, has its own – although untight – borders, which means that people can leave it “on Sunday afternoons, escape far away, without superiors droning on about duty, discipline, restraint, logics, all that sophisticated military bullshit” (ZR 336). Haupt juxtaposes the borders of military (as well as political) orders with ethnographic and physiographic ones<sup>17</sup>. They are the starting point, although he is imprecise in his demarcations (Polesie also stretches to the north, and the area on the other bank of the Bug was not exclusively Polish – even before the partition it belonged to the Grand Duchy of Lithuania) – the goal is artistic rather than factual. Physical borders have the same function within the text: stories about the proving range and episodes in military life, stories about the frontier with a story about a stubborn peasant crossing the dangerous river at night with a cart, and finally the proper story, of which we only receive the following fragment:

It is wild and sylvan. Finally you can see a clearing and some rooftops: a farm in the middle of the forest. Such a mid-forest farm is very different from village and inter-human ones [...] (ZR 336).

Cut, a line between the forest wall and a clearing, an outlined, separate farm is at the same time a delineation between a fulfilled and unfulfilled intention. All three preserved fragments concentrate three basic thematic fields of Haupt's writing around the borders motif:

<sup>16</sup>For a longer discussion, see Aleksander Madyda, *Haupt. Monografia* (Toruń: Wydawnictwo UMK, 2012), 211-289.

<sup>17</sup>I.e. borders which redirect our attention to zones.



exploration of space, love and military experiences. Based on that we can guess how this unfinished short story, which consists of prefabricates-areas characteristic for Haupt, could end. Did Haupt's protagonist associate the forest farm with another story including a for-ester's lodge, as a pretext for revisiting a love story? Or perhaps the girl encountered there would be associated with Nietota? Did resting in that place prevent him from crossing the Bug and reaching Kodeń, was it connected to the ruined bridge symbolizing love? Or maybe Kodeń and the Madonna painting, once stolen by Sapieha from a Roman church, would be a pretext for a story similar to *Lutnia*, incorporated into the future, planned cycle *Geografia Polski* [Poland's geography], simultaneously a history of Poland? The area which Haupt writes about (perhaps this was the reason for moving the plot from Krystynopol and Sokal to Brześć, and the subtle modification of physiographic and ethnographic details), also crosses the borders of three historical parts of Poland, and the Sapiehas could play a similar role to the one played by the Żółkiewskis in *Lutnia* (the family is both connected to the Grand Duchy and Rawski's areas, both close to Haupt). At the same time it situates the painting on the "Polish" side of the Bug.

All these ideas regarding possible ending scenarios do not remove the starting point from sight – the border between fulfillment and unfulfillment, which also absorbs other nuances of delimitation which we have already listed: dividing specific space, the line between self and the other symbolized by the destroyed bridge, the line between immanence and transcendence (perhaps facing Madonna from Kodeń is too much for the protagonist and Haupt saw it as overly devotional), and finally the borders of the text and borders within it.

The protagonist of one of the variants highlighting the Bug's borderline character on the one hand admires the stubborn peasant crossing the river contrary to common sense, and on the other hand we do not know whether he will decide to cross it on horseback or ferry. We do not know whether he is going to choose Polesie, Wołyń, or the native Polish territory, which somewhat complicates the image of the border. However, elsewhere we find the following divagations:

It is strange to find oneself by the water, by the river. The river divides, here is here, and there is there, there is a different country on that side of the Bug, and a different country on this side. But once you are in its waters, you see the clean, polished sand, so white and sacred that it seems you could only throw it on the floor in a church before grand festivities. And willows and wicker, a separate wicker grove, which has nothing to do with other countries; it belongs to water.

And so it is strange here, among the Bug's waters, among wicker, on piles of sand and shoals. As if I found myself beyond space, because if I can be on both sides of the Bug at the same time, in two countries, my national identity is lost (ZHP, box 9, folder 4).

The border converges with a sense of strangeness, important for Haupt – the only state which allows to invalidate it, if only for a moment. Haupt's rule is to constantly approach it, but moving along it or functioning within it are more important than crossing it. In other words, in Haupt's prose borders have a hypnotizing charm, they captivate with their absolutism, but Haupt – under the influence of specific delimitations – tries to extend the initial area,

the frontier, to see the proper border as its element. It is the only possible way of transcending, touching the foreign, the unknown, also in the metaphysical perspective, without losing touch with what is close and own. Starting from topography and cartography, Haupt translates the physical category into axiology, epistemology, and interpersonal experience, as well as his writing technique. He circulates near different borders in order to – just as many other modern artists – reveal a small particle of the reality outlined and hidden by borders<sup>18</sup>, knowing that this is impossible. This is where – as a substitute – the desire to simultaneously be in two, three, or more countries or regions comes from. A border can be a proof of owning Everything, but only when it is seen “from within”. Also in this sense, the Bug – as a border river – simultaneously becomes central, and the border – the center from which one can look in all directions, thus representing the point of cognition of exceptional quality, as Karl Schlögel put it<sup>19</sup>.

Through establishing and removing borders, Haupt’s prose proves the presence of a difference, in many cases painful but necessary. “There are no two identical things in the world”. According to Haupt, the art of constructing texts is not to be indifferent about any of them. Haupt, shaped in times when politicians established borders based on arbitrarily interpreted data, could actually repeat after lord Curzon (who did not have good press in Poland), that the evolution of borders is a question of art rather than science due the fact that their forms and manifestations are plastic and prone to external influences. However, we should also bear in mind that “plasticity” has its limits in Haupt’s prose: what might be surprising in the light of modernity rejecting the schematicity of mental constructs, even in the vaguest of frontier areas he would carefully draw a clear line, and reaching it meant a unique cognitive privilege, protecting – for one more moment – from helplessness in the face of what is limitless.

translated by Paulina Zagórska

<sup>18</sup>Karl Schlögel, *In Space We Read Time: On the History of Civilization and Geopolitics.*, translated into Polish by Izabela Drozdowska, Łukasz Musiał, introduction by Hubert Orłowski (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, 2009), 142.

<sup>19</sup>Donnan, Wilson, 67.

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# KEYWORDS

modernity

*b o r d e r*

frontier

FRAGMENT

**ABSTRACT:**

The paper discusses the claim that borders and frontiers are a source of experience, and at the same time a category which describes Haupt's prose well. In his works, the border category appears in the form of a line marking clear delimitation, and in the form of a buffer zone between different areas. Haupt translates the geographical-political notion of a border into axiology, epistemology, interpersonal experience and writing techniques. His fascination with borders expresses seeking a convenient place which would allow one to perceive the world and text as a complex order situated on the opposite pole to the undifferentiated chaos of the modern reality.

## GEOPOETICS

s p a c e

textual  
delimitation

Z y g m u n t

H a u p t

### NOTE ON THE AUTHOR:

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# “Justifying description” in Zygmunt Haupt’s works

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1.

Contemporary discussions about the return of description as the object of literary studies, which are sometimes summarized under the label “the descriptive turn,” are rooted in new philosophical and methodological thought.<sup>1</sup> They have been directly inspired by the new materialism, the return to things, the philosophy of presence, ecopoetics, as well different realisms, especially speculative realism. They make us reconsider different literary forms and the transformations they have undergone in the 20th and the 21st centuries, that is at the time of a severe representational and mimetic crisis in literature. While it became increasingly difficult for literature to “hold on” to its descriptive obligations and needs, it managed to do so in dialogue with very diverse, and not necessarily or exclusively modern, intellectual and artistic traditions.

Hauptology is also part of this discussion due to the role played by description in Zygmunt Haupt’s works, as well as due to the fact that many interesting self-referential remarks on the power of description may be found in his works. This is by no means a new question; on the contrary, the question of description – its unique status and innovative framing – has attracted the attention of the first insightful critics of *Pierścień z papieru* [The Paper Ring]. When *Pierścień z papieru* received the “Kultura” Literary Award, it was praised for its use of description:

<sup>1</sup> The discussions surrounding the descriptive turn are recapitulated and creatively reimagined by Heather Love in her article “Shimmering Descriptions and Descriptive Criticism”, *New Literary History* 1 (2020): 1–22. Post-conference articles in the special issue of *Representations* 135 (2016) are also important manifestations of the new descriptive literary studies. The methodological foundation was provided by, among others, Stephen Best and Sharon Marcus’s article “Surface Reading: An Introduction”, *Representations* 1 (2009): 1–21.

The memory of his homeland – Eastern Galicia – inspired him to take a kind of material inventory. It seems that in the wild mountains and forests of Galicia, in the farmyards, sheds, monasteries and marketplaces, there was not a single object that the author could not name and describe.<sup>2</sup>

Description is linked here to such non-literary practices as taking "material inventory;" therefore it has, so to speak, a special right to exist. At least some doubts as to the limits of representation are removed – description is granted indisputable privileges. Moreover, it is noted that the writer is able to produce credible, complete, and professional descriptions, and, as such, it is once again possible to legitimately correlate words with things. In the opinion of the jury, Haupt was able to produce descriptions that were both potent and vast in scope. His descriptions were not constrained or limited by the 20th-century mimetic crises; they are large-scale projects which tackle the multiplicity and the multifacetedness of things and their material environments.

This unique ability to "rehabilitate" credible literary description was thus described by one of the members of the jury, Jerzy Stempowski, in a letter to Haupt:

Literature today is remarkably omphaloscopic; it has no vision of the outside world. Dostoyevsky, who traveled so much by rail, never mentioned seeing anything from the window of his train. [...] For half a century, Dostoyevsky had been the favorite author of the European elite, and with him began the era of omphaloscopia in literature. [...] In this perspective, your stories are a revelation.<sup>3</sup>

Stempowski reads Haupt's works against the background of the dominant trends in modern literature, and the ironic metaphor of "omphaloscopic" writing (from the Greek word *omphalos* – the navel) concerns self-referential works in which the writer focusses on and writes about himself. And compared with Dostoyevsky, Haupt is a "revelation;" he shows how literature can offer us new insights into the outside world. Indeed, Stempowski writes about two perspectives of accessing the outside world. The first is a large-scale "vision of the outside world," and the other is a "glimpse," a snapshot of reality, available in and through a little "window." Stempowski accuses Dostoyevsky of not paying attention to and thus not being able to describe what he saw out of the window of his train. It can be surmised that Haupt achieved his descriptive revelations by combining both perspectives – he did not shy away from the philosophical vision of the whole, this fundamental cognitive and epistemological task, but at the same time he delighted as the creator and discoverer of numerous descriptive frames, windows, cracks, and openings by means of which he counterbalanced his somewhat omphaloscopic writing. In this respect, the description of how the world in the eye of a storm appears to the protagonist of one of Haupt's short stories is almost symbolic. A strikingly vivid, graphic, and detailed vision of the outside world, however, appears but for a moment and may be only observed through a little "window." Therefore, it can be tentatively assumed that in Haupt's works description is based on both a visionary project of philosophical reflection which encompasses the entire outside world and, respectively, moments during which one is able to observe things as they are (the "things themselves" in phenomenology) through

<sup>2</sup> P.H. [Paweł Hostowicz – Jerzy Stempowski], "Nagroda Literacka «Kultura» za r. 1962 – Zygmunt Haupt" [1962 "Kultura" Literary Award – Zygmunt Haupt, in: *Jerzy Giedroyc, Zygmunt Haupt. Listy 1947–1975* [Jerzy Giedroyc, Zygmunt Haupt. Letters 1947–1975], ed. Paweł Panas (Warsaw: Biblioteka Więzi, 2022), 292.

<sup>3</sup> *Jerzy Giedroyc, Zygmunt Haupt, 273.*

“little windows” provided by modernity. I shall discuss these two perspectives separately, and, let me add, the following remarks are at most prolegomena for further studies on the phenomenon of descriptiveness in Haupt’s works.

## 2.

Haupt’s characters often struggle in their search for justifications and philosophical reasons for their descriptive practices. In addition, in many descriptions studied by other Hauptologists, the descriptions of “real” events intertwine with conjectures and even outright fabrications. The narrator of “El Pelele,” among others, tries to explain the (elusive) reasons for such a peculiar combination of the real and the unreal:

Co każe mi powtarzać anegdoty, doszukiwać się porównań, wynajdywać paralele, popisywać się pseudoerudycją, usprawiedliwiać tym wszystkim mój opis wobec mnie samego i innych przywoływanych na świadków? Czy ma być to dopełnieniem szczerości podjętego zamiaru, wierności prawdzie, która to prawda jest tak nieuchwytna, tak względna, tak niepokojąca i tak nie zaspakajająca, ale bez niej świat, jaki mnie otacza, [i] ja sam nie istnieję, bo albo coś jest prawdą, albo nią nie jest, a więc wtedy nie istnieje. A znowuż sztuka, mająca nam tę prawdę objawić, jest przecież ustawicznie na pograniczu oszustwa, złudy, udawania, mizdrzenia się, sugestii, w sztuce zawsze jedno coś ukazujemy przez coś innego, prawdę chcemy ukazać przez kształt udany albo przez wymyślny porządek – jak w muzyce przez uszeregowania dźwięków, jak w poezji przez słowa, ich rytm, aliteracje, asonanse, współbrzmienia, tonikę, akcenty, patos, wymysł. Czemu jest tak, że posługujemy się całym arsenałem (gdzieś przeczytane, zasłyszane, zapamiętane) zmyślenia, nieprawdy, ażeby wyrazić prawdę?

Wobec czego niech mi będzie wolno domyślać się i narzucić własne wyobrażenie o tym, jak to panna ksieni pochwała i przytakuje okrutnej zabawie dziewcząt, kiedy tą maskarą, tym pajacem jak ze szkicu gobelinowego Goi w Muzeum Prado, tym El Pelele jestem ja sam. To przecież mnie te panny żywcem dręczą, nabijają się ze mnie, kiedy tak po koszarowemu całkiem „dają mi koca”, odbijają sobie na mnie swe panięskie trwogi, zahamowania, zawstyżenia, marzenia, zachcenia, mszcząc się za wszystkie byłe i przyszłe panięskie klęski i zniewolenia

[What makes me repeat anecdotes, look for comparisons, for parallels, show off with my pseudo-erudition, and thus justify my description to myself and others – my witnesses? Is it meant to prove the sincerity, the truthfulness of my intentions? And the truth is so elusive, so relative, so disturbing, and so unsatisfactory, but without it the world that surrounds me, [and] I myself do not exist, because either something is true or it is not true, and therefore it does not exist. And, art, which is supposed to reveal this truth to us, is constantly on the verge of deception, delusion, pretense, make-believe, suggestion; in art we always show one thing through something else; we want to show the truth by means of an agreeable shape or an elaborate structure – in music through the arrangement of sounds, in poetry through words, their rhythm, alliterations, assonances, consonances, the tonic, stress, pathos, invention. Why is it that we use this entire arsenal of fabrications, untruths (something we’ve read, heard, remembered) in order to express the truth?



Therefore, I shall speculate and impose my own idea of how the Abbess applauds and approves of the girls' cruel game, when I am this monstrosity, this clown as if from Goya's tapestry sketch in the Prado Museum, this El Pelele.

These girls torment me alive, make fun of me, they haze me, they take their revenge on me for their female fears, inhibitions, embarrassments, dreams, desires, they take their revenge on me for all their past and future defeats and oppressions].<sup>4</sup>

The narrator is fully aware that he lives in an era when description and describing *per se* are not appreciated and acknowledged for what they are; therefore, description must be "justified," "legitimized," and connected with the "truth." We can assume that we are talking about a continuous practice, and not an individual gesture; Haupt is constantly occupied with justifying description in his works, and at the same time he wonders "what makes him" do it. On the one hand, the growing criticism of the mimetic abilities of literature "makes him do it." Indeed, Haupt himself often shared his doubts in this regard, drawing attention to the referential power of language and the danger of being trapped in a world of signs. On the other hand, in the quoted fragment, the narrator also talks about how he is constantly looking for these justifications and we can see that he is trying to find them in philosophy, ancient and contemporary poetics, musicology, psychology, and the history of painting. In the vast archives of thought and art, he finds and tests arguments for description, challenges and rejects them, tries to find others, constantly advancing new arguments and examining further evidence which could prove the validity of description.

The narrator is particularly worried about, but also intrigued by, the fact that he needs to employ an "entire arsenal of fabrications" to justify his vision of life at a boarding school for girls haunted by the ghost of an Abbess who died a long time ago. Fabrication, the work of imagination, thus helps justify description – the narrator makes his characters function in a defiantly ahistorical way. This does not necessarily make him an advocate of constructivism – the descriptive attempts of Haupt's narrator could just as well function in the critical context of contemporary speculative realism, which, thanks to philosophical reflection, reinvigorates the discussion on the possible relations between objects outside consciousness. This is based on the conviction that in order to justify reflection on the relationship between the mind and the extra-linguistic realities, we must move beyond correlationism,<sup>5</sup> i.e., the philosophical standpoint that we can only speak of beings in terms of how they are given to us or our mode of access. The limitations of correlationism are that we rule out the possibility of, and the basis for reflection on, the relations that actually take place outside consciousness in various discrete active and causative forms. The practice of speculation, creating imaginary projections of references and processes which constantly take place in various dimensions of reality, is thus justified. Imaginative speculation is one of Haupt's favorite and most often used narrative formulas. Stories which explore "what would happen if" his relationship with Stefcia or Anusia, with whom the protagonist flirted in his youth, had been different or recurring direct references to Hans Vaihinger's philosophy of "as if" thus do not have to be discussed solely in the context of the solipsistic and subjective world of fiction, which

<sup>4</sup> Zygmunt Haupt, "El Pelele", in idem: *Baskijski diabeł. Opowiadania i reportaże* [The Basque devil. Stories and reportages] (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 2007), 327–328.

<sup>5</sup> Quentin Meillassoux, *After Finitude: An Essay on the Necessity of Contingency*, trans. Ray Brassier (London and New York: Continuum, 2010), 19–20.

forever replaced reality, leaving the I melancholic and afraid. While Haupt's characters know this state well and often realize the fictionality of their stories and visions, at the same time "something tells them" to imagine things, to create bold visions. The fact that the characters are free to creatively explore their imaginary visions and that they can create truly "vast" speculative descriptions of many aspects of the world should also be read in the wider context of acknowledging the discreet yet palpable presence of the real beyond the correlationist control of the mind. Haupt's narrator creates his descriptions not because he believes in the real in literature but because he feels that he must accompany the world in its ontological multiplicity. The feeling of presence, often the presence of something absent, as is often the case in the writer's émigré memories, must be matched by a description that boldly explores "pretense, make-believe, suggestion." Often inaccessible or only partially accessible reality calls for devices which combine various descriptive literary techniques. Indeed, this description must boldly speculate about the relations between objects that may or must occur outside the character's/narrator's/writer's consciousness. All available modalities of writing, all levels of probability and improbability, and mixing actual "facts" with increasingly "unreal" plotlines help one tentatively enter and explore the discrete dimensions and dynamics of relations which occur outside consciousness. Just like in the famous story about Stefcia, one can and should ask about the relationship between the protagonist's former love interest and his later life. A forgotten love story, even if it is not recorded in someone's memory and even if it is not "part" of consciousness, is still an "object," and the relations it enters into with other objects may only be described speculatively because we do not have direct access to this object. As such, instead of emphasizing the narrator's melancholy mood or analyzing his fear of the uncanny, we should focus our interpretation of this story on the speculative projections which bring the narrator closer to the numerous worlds which are discreetly or secretly active. In any case, we can see that the narrator functions in a sphere which may be reached only through daring speculation, "illicit" or limited description, which looks for reasons and rationale to "justify description" beyond correlationism.

What is at stake has been explicitly formulated; it is nothing short of a fundamental ontological question. The narrator says that "the truth is so elusive, so relative, so disturbing, and so unsatisfactory, but without it the world that surrounds me, [and] I myself do not exist, because either something is true or it is not true, and therefore it does not exist." Therefore, by bravely and knowingly entering into the sphere of the elusive and the relative, which can also be defined as literary speculation, the descriptor addresses the controversy over the existence of the world, explored in the 20th century by Roman Ingarden. What "makes" Haupt's narrators/characters constantly look for justifications for their descriptions is the controversy over the existence of the world and subjectivity. They ultimately agree to accept the "unsatisfactory" truth, which can be understood as reality that is elusive and often accessible only through speculation; still, even in such a discrete form, this reality is constantly present, waiting for an attentive and patient narrator, that is one who would be willing to accept such limitations. As we know, Ingarden did not ultimately find proof of the existence of the world. And in Haupt's short stories "something tells" one not to give up, which is why other traditions, philosophies, and artistic trends are active in them.

Even among the representatives of the Lviv-Warsaw school, with which Ingarden was associated, one can find thinkers who seem to understand Haupt's narrators, determined to justify their descriptions. Indeed, one of the founders of speculative realism, Graham Harman, looks

for inspiration in the writings of the Polish philosopher Kazimierz Twardowski,<sup>6</sup> specifically, in Twardowski's *On the Content and Object of Presentations*. Harman, who wishes to move beyond constructivism, draws on the work of the founder of the Lviv-Warsaw school as an alternative to Husserl's view of the relation between the judgment and the object. Harman discusses Twardowski's *On the Content and Object of Presentations* in detail arguing that twentieth-century philosophy could have distanced itself from Husserl's idealism, which focused so much on human subjectivity and its correlates. Twardowski proposed and justified an alternative system of relations between consciousness and the object. He argued that every action or judgment is a presentation of the object, in which we must distinguish between the content and the object. The content of presentation is the recorded way of perceiving it, but the object is something more than the content of presentation. The Lviv philosopher gave an example of a painting,<sup>7</sup> which corresponds to the content of presentation and differs from its model, that is the object of presentation. Twardowski listed three arguments to support his distinction, one of which has already been indicated above – the object has more qualities than the content of presentation. The second argument was that the act and the content of presentation always exist, but the object may or may not exist. Finally, the third argument is essentially linguistic and proposes that several names for the same place (such as "Mozart's birthplace") can refer to the same object.

Let us return to the quote from "El Pelele," where the narrator dramatically asks why he must resort to anecdotes and parallels in order to "thus justify my description to myself and others – my witnesses." After all, his descriptive efforts can also be described in Twardowski's philosophical terms as **exploring and maintaining a difference between the content of presentation and the object of presentation**. The narrator struggles in his efforts and cannot ever be sure of the result, which is signaled by the many different contents of presentation. Ewa Wiegandt was probably right when she wrote that Haupt in his writing wished to express "non-relativized existence,"<sup>8</sup> since even when one is surrounded by contents (appearances, images, etc.) one is constantly reminded that the writer writes only to distinguish the object from its content, difficult as it may be. Only the hope of finding the "truth", of connecting – often only in and through speculation – with an object that exists beyond the game of references, allows one to still believe that the world and one's world exist. Haupt asked questions similar to Twardowski's questions at a time when it was more difficult to uphold some of his assertions, but at the same time perhaps they were easier to discuss in a work of art than in a philosophical dissertation. Exploring the difference between the content and the object of presentation opened literature up to complex speculations about the nature of reality and its various discrete forms, and, respectively, the relations between objects that exist outside consciousness.

In order to further draw on Twardowski's second argument, it should be added that in "El Pelele," as well as in other short stories by Haupt, the narrator speculates extensively about

<sup>6</sup> See: Graham Harman, *The Quadruple Object* (London: Zero Books, 2011), 23-25.

<sup>7</sup> Bogdan Bakies discussed Kazimierz Twardowski's philosophy in more detail – see: Bogdan Bakies, "Twardowskiego koncepcja przedmiotu jako korelatu aktu [Twardowski's concept of an object as a correlate of an act], *Studia Philosophiae Christianae* 11 (1975): 11–48.

<sup>8</sup> Ewa Wiegandt, "Wszystko-Nic Zygmunta Haupta" [Zygmunt Haupt's Everything-Nothing, in: *Ulotność i trwanie. Studia z tematologii i historii literatury* [Transience and duration. Studies in Thematology and History of Literature], ed. Ewa Wiegandt, Agnieszka Czyżak, Zbigniew Kopec (Poznań: Wydawnictwo "Poznańskie Studia Polonistyczne", 2003): 63.

the objects of his presentations and is keen to make judgments about objects which do not exist. In “El Pelele,” we find judgments and contents of presentation which refer to the 18th-century abbess, the founder of the monastery, who haunts the convent school as a ghost. She even shoots the storyteller with a gun (and she does not miss). Playing with the untrue is yet another, yet different, form of probing the difference between the content and the object of presentation, which is non-existent in such moments. Sometimes we see in Haupt’s short stories multiple examples of probing the difference between the content and the object of presentation in and through the act of writing, where fabrications, that is parts that are in one way or another made up, point to where the objects may appear. The question is not whether one should fantasize, make up, or simulate, but whether this will help create the negative, the outline of the place where the object definitely is.

Let us try to explain one more peculiar aspect of “El Pelele” in this context. At some point in his quasi-philosophical argument, the narrator comes to the conclusion that “I am this (...) El Pelele. After all, these girls torment me alive, make fun of me, they haze me (...)” Twardowski would say that the tension between the puppet harassed by the girls in the convent school, that is the content of this presentation, and the object of this presentation becomes palpable. This situation may be compared to the relation between the painting and the model, which the Lviv philosopher described in order to emphasize that the object of presentation has more qualities than the content. The young ladies, too, knew that the straw puppet was not a real man, was not in fact any man they knew because real men as objects of presentation had more qualities than a puppet made in their likeness. The girls hit the puppet with sticks and thus can be sure that the men who are the object of presentation really exist; when they hit the puppet, they transform their relations with the objects that the puppet presents, that is their relations with those men who really exist. When the narrator says, “I am this (...) El Pelele,” he confirms that there is a difference between the puppet and the object of presentation; *he* proves that this difference exists, albeit in different time and space, because he is one of the many imaginary men with whom the girls relate by tossing and hitting the straw doll. Therefore, the puppet powerfully refers to many painful experiences that exist and will exist in the real life of those girls. At the same time, the girls “take their revenge on me for all their past and future defeats and oppressions.” Therefore, they relate to all the experiences that exist, that are remembered, and that have been forgotten. They relate to all the experiences that exist as traumas or small wounds, as past or current fears of something that, alas, did not take place. They relate to all the experiences that exist in the potential or foreseeable future – all those experiences which other women share with them when they describe their own or someone else’s relationships with men, etc. The puppet which the girls hit is a manifestation of many different ways in which it relates to men as models for the puppet, and they are endowed with numerous, often traumatic or frightful, qualities, which may only be activated speculatively.

Last but not least, let us focus on Twardowski’s third argument, that is the belief that the difference between the content and the object of presentation is also evidenced in the many different possible names for the same object. Haupt often renewed his efforts to maintain the difference between the content and the object of presentation by means of descriptive recurrence, that is repeating his attempt at describing something. There are many examples of this process. There are stories such as “Deszcz” [The Rain], as well as many variants (versions) of different stories;

also, Haupt often refers to the same object with a number of different names ("A, Anusia, Anusieczka, Anusienieczka..." [A, Anna, Annie, Anoushka...]). Haupt scholars recognize and often emphasize the fact that this obsession was fueled by a melancholic loss of the object, the very experience of loss (defined in psychoanalytic terms). Repetitive and neurotic acts of description of the same object are a response to the perceived "mimetic powerlessness" of literature. However, it is also possible that "what makes" Haupt's narrator describe the same object over and over again is the feeling of a striking, and sometimes even ecstatically experienced (as in the first sentence of "Madrygał dla Anusi" [Madrigal for Anusia]), difference between the content and the object of presentation. The many different names reassure one about the existence of "truth", strengthen one's sense of presence, affirm the existence of the writing I. Indeed, in "Fragmenty" [Fragments], Haupt defines happiness as a set of experiences that "przeżyte na własność, nie do odebrania" [I have lived, they are my own, no one can take them away from me].<sup>9</sup> In this regard, Haupt not only does not doubt that these objects exist, but also emphasizes that they fill the speaker with joy. Repetitive descriptive efforts should thus be read as mimetizing the activity of objects that exist as ecstasies, i.e., object which transcend themselves as they "enter" the speaker and make him produce testimonies of their "pulsating" existence in and through, among others, multiple descriptive attempts. Haupt's trademark enumerations and lists, which overwhelm and fascinate with the sheer number of objects, may be read in a similar critical context. Using many different names to describe the quality of a given world strengthens the belief that there is a difference between this world as the object and the content of description, and it thus strengthens the belief in the existence of subjectivity and the world.

### 3.

Twardowski's philosophy is but one example extracted from the great archive of thought and art to which Haupt referred in his efforts to justify the effort to build grand visions of the outside world. Discussing Haupt's works in the context of Twardowski's philosophy was not only meant to show the (consciously or unconsciously developed) connections which might help one analyze the short stories in question but also, perhaps more importantly, demonstrate the great number of possible philosophical and artistic attempts which Haupt carried out in a vast cultural field, where he found new arguments and new ways of justifying his descriptions.

Respectively, as Stempowski and I argued, Haupt's characters sometimes find a "gap" through which they can connect with reality. In such situations, description is justified by the experience itself (or, in phenomenological terms, experience in itself), by the unquestionable manifestation of the violent existence of the world. We find such "memorable" scenes, "telling" details, or moments of revelation in many Haupt's short stories. The narrator creates descriptions that are supposed to convey the complexity of reality as it manifests itself in itself. A good example of this is the story "Cyklon" [The Storm] to which I referred in the introduction. The world suddenly reveals itself in the eye of a cyclone and, as Stempowski pointed out, this revelation is framed by a violent storm that precedes and follows that moment. The narrator does not claim to be able to access such moments at any given moment.

<sup>9</sup> Zygmunt Haupt, "Fragmenty" [Fragments], in idem: *Baskijski diabeł*: 242.

Still, sometimes he decides to describe, as accurately as possible, such a moment of a sudden and intense encounter with reality.

This was indeed thematized in “Cyklon:” the narrator begins the story with a long critical digression on modernity, which in many ways mediates the relation between the I and the world. In addition, modernity makes one boastful – one can rely on knowledge acquired through “szeregowanie, systematyzowanie zjawisk” [ordering, systematizing], which makes the narrator conclude: “[r]azem z dawną sztuką uogólniania i abstrahowania i logiką dedukcji stworzyliśmy sobie osobny świat w świecie, «*fool’s paradise*», jak mówią Anglicy” [using [t]he old art of generalizing and abstracting and the logic of deduction, we have created a distinct world within a world, “*a fool’s paradise*,” as the English say].<sup>10</sup> When the storm hits, the description the narrator has so elaborately created provokes him to make one more cutting remark:

Więc stworzyliśmy sobie dookoła ten wielki, uporządkowany świat statystyczny, demograficzny, mapowy, biuletynowy, ponazywaliśmy to sobie wymyślnymi imionami i posegregowaliśmy, i poszufladkowaliśmy, i wierzymy sobie w niego na słowo honoru – a tu jesteśmy sami w swoim małym światku dotykalnym.

[So, we have created this huge well-organized world of statistics, demographics, maps, and bulletins, we have come up with fancy names and we have ordered everything, and we have classified everything and we have believed in it just because – but in fact we are all alone in our small tangible world]<sup>11</sup>

Therefore, what supports and justifies the description of the cyclone is the rejection of the modern temptation to perceive the world as fully mediatized. It is the “small tangible world” with which the individual connects in his solitude and singularity that must be described. Importantly, it is a “tangible” reality, it is material, it can be physically touched; one can connect with it, examine it, feel it. The focus on the sense of touch emphasizes that different senses are active and important in this “small tangible world;” the sense of sight is not the dominant one.

The description of the story reveals the onslaught of the extra-linguistic, material reality of the world. It is so violent that a family locked in a house watches the raging storm only through holes in the boarded-up windows. Once again, one may connect with reality only through a little “window,” but at the same time the active, imposing, and overwhelming nature of the “tangible world” is emphasized. Let me at this point turn to Kathleen Stewart who identified in Annie Dillard’s book *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek* “points of precision” which she defined as striking “styles” of the perceived objects.<sup>12</sup> An object or a phenomenon demands a meticulous description of their singularity; they are themselves points of precision – they give rise to precise descriptions. Stewart emphasizes that “[t]he objects themselves have a vital, even explosive, tension and torque of qualities. Their points of precision are not a content but a pause in the very move to represent a finite, categorical reality.”<sup>13</sup>

<sup>10</sup>Zygmunt Haupt, “Cyklon” [The Storm], in idem: *Baskijski diabeł*: 648.

<sup>11</sup>Haupt, “Cyklon”: 651–652.

<sup>12</sup>Kathleen Stewart, “Point of Precision”, *Representations* 135 (2016): 43.

<sup>13</sup>Stewart, 34.

Indeed, Stewart also uses description to challenge "categorical reality;" the "points of precision" she identifies in descriptions can help define what, according to Haupt's narrator, takes place in the "small tangible world." This concept works even better when the points of precision are the raging winds and rainbands of a storm viewed through holes in boarded-up windows. They are definitely endowed with an "explosive tension" and a "torque of qualities." In any case, description is as if governed by the points of precision of given objects and they are described in their self-evident singularity, that is, as they have been imprinted on the mind of the subject who witnessed the storm. The process of imprinting, which provoked Stewart to refer to the category of style which etymologically refers to the *stilus*, the stylus that leaves a mark on clay tablets, should be emphasized. The tornado imprints its material form on the mind of the observer; it is a "point of precision" which must be described.

The final meeting with the eye of a cyclone, that is an area of calm weather at the center of a strong storm (everything is calm for several minutes before the storm begins to rotate the other way with the same intensity), is particularly important for understanding the subject who is "all alone in [his] small tangible world" is. The subject experiences its existence as a situated being; his perspective is radically different from the perspective that extends beyond the eye of a storm. At the same time, the subject can experience life primarily in this "tangible world," which appears for a short time as his fundamental reality, before a routine of modern life, a "well-organized world," returns. The protagonist talks about destroyed houses and trees, walks among them with his neighbors, and finally remarks ecstatically:

A nad tym wszystkim niebo błękitne i śmiejące się i cud powietrza, które, przyniesione z wirem, jak gość niespodziewany, onieśmiela nas aż do wstrzymania oddechu. Ptaki śpiewają w gałęziach drzew i drzewa wsłuchane są i nieśmiałe, wzruszone, czuje się wzruszenie i jakby spazm tych drzew po ich histerycznym popłochu w huraganie.

Tak więc oko cyklonu, samo oko! Wiemy, że za dziesięć, za dwadzieścia minut zaczniesz dąć na nowo i przepisowo w przeciwną stronę.

[And above all this there is a blue and laughing sky and the wonder of the air which was brought with the vortex like an unexpected guest; it intimidates us so much that we hold our breath. The birds are singing in the branches of the trees and the trees are listening, timid and thrilled; one can feel the emotions and the thrill of these trees after their hysterical panic during the hurricane.

So, the eye of the storm, the eye itself! We know that in ten, twenty minutes the wind will start blowing again and, of course, in the opposite direction.]<sup>14</sup>

This description expresses euphoria and "thrill" caused by re-connecting with the world, if just for a moment. The described phenomenon is, as Stewart would suggest, active here. Euphoria gives the impression that the world appears "like an unexpected guest;" it becomes accessible in qualities and forms beyond the expectations of the subject – it arrives from those dimensions of reality which remain beyond the correlationist control of the mind that

<sup>14</sup>Haupt, "Cyklon", 659.

wants to anticipate events. Man “holds his breath” because he is not the active force of creation – reality which emerges in all its power is. It is reality which suddenly turns out to be active after many days of apparent apathy, which must now reveal itself as hitherto unnoticed extra-conscious agency. Its current movement is intimidating, and makes the subject stop or suspend his actions, so that he can finally feel and enjoy the world in itself. “A blue and laughing sky” reminds us of the reality of reality; it is the first principle – it may be found at the top of the hierarchy of phenomena. It towers above the well-organized modern “fool’s paradise.” It has destroyed and discarded all the devices of this world in the aftermath of the cyclone, and instead of the “fool’s paradise,” it offers **a moment of happiness in the tangible “blue and laughing” sky.**

It turns out that the moments of connecting with the world recorded in Haupt’s short stories, which may be accessed only under certain conditions and within certain frames, give rise to description, which is its particularly suggestive justification. Indeed, these descriptions point to the alienating qualities of the modern mediatization of reality. All mediations then share the fate of human-made devices destroyed by the storm, because they stood in the way of the manifestation of the world in itself, which always “towers” over everything else; it is the desired “blue and laughing sky” of modern subjectivity.

4.

Zygmunt Haupt in his works reflected on the descriptive possibilities of modern literature. The writer was certainly looking for new reasons to justify description. “Something made him” do it. I discussed the writer’s attempts to find justifications for great descriptive undertakings in philosophy. At the same time, Haupt sometimes took a “short cut” and reinforced his descriptive efforts by recording a fleeting moment of coming into contact with reality in and through accidental openings or “windows.” Certainly, however, the manner in which he engaged in a dialogue, either directly or indirectly, with the 19<sup>th</sup>-century masters of descriptive prose, that is, for example, Gustave Flaubert and Guy de Maupassant, should be discussed in greater detail. Respectively, the similarities and the differences in experiencing the material world between Haupt’s works and the more spiritual tradition of modern epiphanic prose should be analyzed. However, in order to fully understand Haupt’s descriptive efforts we should further analyze the poetics of his descriptions and the self-referential formulas employed by his narrators. The goal of this essay was the latter.

translated by Małgorzata Olsza



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# KEYWORDS

## DESCRIPTION

*the descriptive turn*

## SPECULATIVE REALISM

### **ABSTRACT:**

This article discusses the problem of description in the works of Zygmunt Haupt in the wider context of the contemporary “descriptive turn” in literary studies. First, early critical readings and reviews of Haupt’s exceptional descriptions, which the writer included in his stories even though he acknowledged a crisis of mimesis in literature, are discussed. Indeed, Haupt made a conscious effort to “justify description,” which played an important role in his works, as Jerzy Stempowski noticed, either as part of a comprehensive vision of the outside world with tentatively invokes philosophical justifications or in moments during which Haupt’s characters come into contact with reality in and through accidental openings or “windows.” The article discusses these two respective methods of justifying description, drawing on speculative realism as well as the philosophy of Kazimierz Twardowski, which inspires the contemporary advocates of new philosophical realisms.

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## ZYGMENT HAUPT

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# The (im)moral landscape:

Zygmunt Haupt's  
short story

*Deszcz* [The Rain]

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The poetics of Zygmunt Haupt's works, somewhat old-fashioned and excessive in its use of stylistic tricks, is in fact a precise tool that allows the writer to create characters, situations and worlds that are both simple (almost tangible) and complex (in terms of varied and complex epistemological frameworks). Haupt's prose, strongly marked by emotions, ultimately addresses the fundamental existential and ethical issues, and forces us to ask questions about the human condition in a world threatened by disintegration.

The narrator of Haupt's short four-page story entitled *Deszcz* [The Rain] states at one point: "Tak sobie ułożyłem to opowiadanie i teraz przyglądam się swemu dziełu. O czym ono ma mówić? Co za wieść cholerną ma nieść w sobie" [I have arranged this story thus and now I am looking at my work. What is it supposed to be about? What bloody message is it supposed to convey?].<sup>1</sup> Thus, he indicates that this short memoiristic sketch hides some acute and "bloody" problem, and the question of "arranging" – constructing, composing – the narrative, explicitly stated, points to its conceptual nature. Respectively, the questions which the

<sup>1</sup> Zygmunt Haupt, "Deszcz" [The Rain], in: *Baskijski diabeł. Opowiadania i reportaże* [The Basque Devil: Stories and reportages], ed. Aleksander Madyda (Wołowiec: Wydawnictwo Czarne 2016), 277. All quotations and page numbers are from this edition.

narrator asks, which suggest that it might be difficult to unambiguously interpret what he has written thus far, point to the question of the literary genre. This is not a short story, but a literary landscape depicted in three, seemingly similar, variations.

What draws our attention in the text is the linguistic supraorganization combined with emotionality; in other words, artistry combined with the promise of a confession. Andrzej Stasiuk, who recognized Haupt as his literary master, said in an interview entitled *Czytam tylko Haupta* [I only read Haupt] that:

[Haupt] really only describes himself. Although sometimes it's not that obvious. For example, in the story *Deszcz*, we don't know where we are, but these three pages describing rain in the unnamed town send shivers down your spine! Is this Galicia? It could be anywhere...<sup>2</sup>

The personal and intimate dimension of this prose may remain in the sphere of readerly reconstructions: Jakub Lubelski, in his article "Zygmunta Haupta porzucanie literackości" [Zygmunt Haupt Abandons Literariness], stated that this short story is a "prose fresco." He then added: "It seems that *Deszcz* actually is about the rain."<sup>3</sup> And yet, despite the fact that the word "rain" appears in the text 32 times and despite the fact that it is filled with the sound of the rain (and the text supposedly inexplicably "sends shivers down your spine"), rain itself is not the theme – it is a synesthetic trick that has been used in a number of different ways. It is not the rain but what is "hidden" behind it that is the "bloody message," as stated by the narrator at the beginning. It is arrested in a cleverly constructed image.

The short story has been framed, placed in a parenthesis, which points to the constant fight against unwanted shifts of memory. The first sentence reads "Niektóre sprawy zapamiętuje się w życiu na zawsze" [Some things in life are remembered forever] (275) and the final sentence reads "Zapamiętałem tylko deszcz" [I only remember the rain] (278). And the story does not describe the process of reconstructing past events or searching for the cause-and-effect links between them. It is an image of a place arrested in time; it is a landscape arrested in a frame of memories; it is the panorama of a town seen only once. The narrator says: "Musiałem być przez jeden dzień w tym miejscu obcym, nie znanym mi dotąd, byłem tam przez cały dzień i deszcz padał przez dzień cały, i zaledwie ustał nad wieczorem" [I had to be for one day in this strange place, this unknown place, I was there all day, and it rained all day long, and it only stopped raining in the evening] (275). The narrator observes the spa, which he visited only once, through the layers of time; alas, it does not evoke melancholic longing for the past but forces the narrator to come to terms with his traumatic memories.

The landscape recreated in memory is an attempt to see the world subjectively, or even to impose a subjective order on the world (past events). Marek Zaleski thus interprets the essence of Haupt's prose:

<sup>2</sup> Andrzej Stasiuk, "Czytam tylko Haupta" [I only read Haupt], <https://www.tygodnikpowszechny.pl/czytam-tylko-haupta-30124>, date of access: February 24, 2022.

<sup>3</sup> Jakub Lubelski, "Zygmunta Haupta porzucanie literackości" [Zygmunt Haupt Abandons Literariness], <https://teologiapolityczna.pl/jakub-lubelski-zygmunta-haupta-porzucanie-literackosci-2>, date of access: February 24, 2022.

it tries to become pure intuition, pure seeing. It seems to assume that, unlike in the act of storytelling entangled in time [...], the “now” of the act of perception allows you to touch eternity and capture the momentary, changing aspect of the world, the becoming of reality.<sup>4</sup>

Thus, “seeing” is effectively transgressing epistemological constraints or, as in the case of *Deszcz*, consciously creating them. Epistemological barriers and memory gaps which appear in the text force the reader to dig deeper, to move beyond the surface of the image.

The rain that makes it difficult to see is an important part of the landscape. The narrator recalls: “(...) przyzwyczałem się do tego deszczu, jakby należał on do krajobrazu, jakby tu nie miało nigdy być co innego, tylko deszcz” [I got used to this rain, as if it were part of the landscape, as if there would never be anything else here but the rain] (275). In addition, the rain functions like a screen that blurs the shapes and the colors because it “leżał pionowo na tym zielonym krajobrazie z zieleni drzew” [was lying vertically on this green landscape made of green trees] (275). The surface of the image, recreated from memory, is enriched with further details. The connections between Haupt’s works and painting have been pointed out by many critics. We can see that in this short story as well. The link is thematized and played out at the level of the narrator’s consciousness, who says: “Pamiętam zielen tego miejsca, jakby zielen ta, jak farba przez ten deszcz rozpuszczona, zafarbowała wszystko na zielono” [I remember the green of this place, as if this green, like paint dissolved by the rain, dyed everything green] (275). Thus, what was retained in memory was an immobile, almost monochromatic, blurred, and fuzzy landscape. This image was not a masterpiece of perfection but rather a hasty sketch made by an amateur.

Looking at the represented space makes one want to capture its unique nature. As Ewa Wiegandt writes: “Haupt can make the world flat as a canvas, and he can render the image flat, as if devoid of a sense of perspective and depth (...) It is down-to-earth and trivial but also drawn with tenderness, empathy, grace, and attention.”<sup>5</sup> In *Deszcz*, a special “non-anthropological place” – an empty, lonely, deserted spa whom the narrator visits out of season – is the *locale*. At the same time, it is a canvas on which different elements can be placed and combined.

The narrator remembers the space as “flat.” Its meaning changes, depending on the characters who are placed in it. Trying to remember who they were is not an end in itself but rather a therapeutic exercise or even a form of silencing one’s memories. The narrator states: “To dziwne: pamiętam deszcz, pamiętam tło tego deszczu, a poza tym niczego więcej już nie pamiętam” [It’s strange: I remember the rain, I remember the background of this rain, and I don’t remember anything else] (276). Still, we learn a lot about the past, perhaps more than the narrator would like. In Haupt’s prose, as Bogumiła Kaniewska, Anna Legeżyńska, and Piotr Śliwiński write, one cannot “capture the past” but one can observe how memory fuels creation: “Memory, and its role, is an unknown, an intuition, a projection. It is not epic because it challenges its down-to-earth nature. It is therapeutic because it allows one to turn

<sup>4</sup> Marek Zaleski, *Formy pamięci. O przedstawianiu przeszłości w polskiej literaturze współczesnej* [Forms of Memory: The Representations of the Past in Polish Contemporary Literature] (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo IBL, 1996), 50.

<sup>5</sup> Ewa Wiegandt, *Niepokoje literatury. Studia o prozie polskiej XX wieku* [The anxieties of literature: Polish prose of the twentieth century] (Poznań: Wydawnictwo WBPiCAK, 2010), 205.

injuries into ecstasy.”<sup>6</sup> Especially when the ability to control the image of the past provides one with a sense of security.

In *Deszcz*, looking into the past seems at first to be a form of a play with how deceitfully elusive it is. However, the emotions revealed at the end of the text show that the process of transforming painful experiences into literary epiphanies can be extremely difficult and not always successful. Haupt-the author shows that unwanted memories ultimately turn out to be stronger than his character’s efforts to “forget,” stronger than his attempts to hide the past behind the rain. The three possible reasons which made the protagonist visit the nameless spa are mentioned in the text twice. They effectively give rise to the three variants of the story – it can be read as a social commentary, as a love story, and as a criminal story – and all three are but suggested to the reader.

One reason, therefore, could be money. However, the protagonist does not remember who the creditor or the debtor in that haphazard and as if half-hearted transaction was, nor does he remember the transaction itself. “Może nałgał, a może to ja jemu nałgałem” [Maybe he lied to me, or maybe I lied to him] (276), the narrator says dispassionately. Respectively, a love story mentions a girl who left the protagonist – she remains a disembodied apparition – and the protagonist’s wish to return to her. His futile attempts to win her back, however, are a cliché of memory, which rely on the conventional approach to love stories. In both cases, the protagonist decides to visit the town; it is his choice. It is not the case in the third variant.

The narrator wonders about why he visited the spa and makes an unexpected guess: “A może wysłali mnie, ażebym zabił człowieka” [Maybe they sent me to kill someone?] (276). “They” are mentioned and their right to give orders is not questioned. In this case, unlike in earlier “spectral” variants with equally “spectral” props (money which is an attribute of a social story, or the lover’s hat which “screams” love story), a real gun appears, cocked and loaded. The physicality of the victim, the “faceless” murdered man, which the narrator ineffectively tries to “remove” from his aching memory, is also real:

Posłali mnie aż tam, ażebym poczekał, aż będzie wychodził z furtki pensjonatu, i kiedy wystrzelone i usmolone łuski pistoletu będą lśniły na żużlu chodnika, to nawet wtedy nie będę widział twarzy zabitego przeze mnie i leżącego plecami do góry człowieka ze śmiesznie wykręconymi nogami [They sent me all the way there to wait until he came out of the boarding house gate, and when the tarred pistol shells fell onto the black pavement, even then I couldn’t see the face of the man I killed; I only saw his back and his legs which were ridiculously twisted] (276).

Then, after he shot the man in the back, he could not see his face, but he remembered the grotesque arrangement of the lifeless body, the eternal “trace” of the crime.

The possible variants of the story are mentioned for the second time – they also take place against a green background, with the same characters and the same little details. A social commentary

<sup>6</sup> Bogumiła Kaniewska, Anna Legeżyńska, Piotr Śliwiński, *Literatura polska XX wieku* [Polish literature of the twentieth century] (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, 2005), 126.

points to “wymagowana ważność transakcji dwudziestozłotowej” [the imaginary importance of a twenty-złoty transaction] (277). The unreal romance is ironically presented as a sad love story, that is “jedynosc godną kolekcji najtragiczniejszych dzieł się od stworzenia świata” [a story on a par with the most tragic events since the creation of the world] (277). The third variant is expanded, and the criminal plane is supplemented by ideology. The trip to the rainy town could thus be:

najaltruistyczniejszy dzień, kiedy w imię czegoś, dla racji takiej a takiej sprawy, w mokry dzień pod zmokłymi liśćmi alei uzdrowiska pomiędzy sezonami potrafiłem zabić z tyłu człowieka, którego twarzy nigdy nie widziałem, i patrzeć na swoje ręce, zanim panika poniosła mnie, jak pijaka, by zataczać się pomiędzy ścianami świata [the most altruistic day of my life, when, in the name of something, for the sake of a cause, on a rainy day, under the wet leaves, in an out-of-season spa, in an alley, I killed a man whose face I'd never seen, I shot him in the back and looked at my hands before panic made me stagger between the walls of the world like a drunk] (277–278).

On the one hand, some old, unnamed idea, now irrelevant, forgotten, invalidated, or verified by time is mentioned. On the other hand, we read about a crime that may not be forgotten and that may not be hidden behind the rain. It cannot be processed during DIY therapy sessions either. The suggested “altruism,” a sacrifice made for others or for a cause is just a ploy – cliché justifications rooted in the collective consciousness are imposed on the crime.

In the end, we are left with the dead twisted body and the shameless criminal who killed the man by shooting him in the back, and then staggered, in panic, between the “walls of the world.” In fact, there is no escaping responsibility for the crime. Ideology, believing in the cause, and the verdict issued on behalf of the community cannot remove the stain of guilt. Haupt’s reflections remind me of Barbara Skarga’s comments on the nature of evil in social life:

There is a lot of wickedness in social life. So, we are stuck in an unbridgeable, insurmountable gap between utopian dreams, the desire for brotherhood, closeness to others, and perfect social forms (although we have never witnessed it) and the current of malice, hatred, tragic wars, and evil that surrounds them. If – which no one can say for sure – evil always acts in the “in-between,” which is born between I and You, and the “in-between” provokes and calls, then, I think, we are both responsible for this and no one can absolve us from this responsibility.<sup>7</sup>

Regardless of whether I alone contribute to evil, or You, or We, we should be aware of the consequences, Skarga writes, and repeats after Leszek Kołakowski that “it is not only I who am threatened by the enormity of my defiance: the universe as a whole is threatened, plunged as it were into chaos and uncertainty.”<sup>8</sup> Evil permanently violates the orders of reality and, at times, makes individuals lose faith in them.

*Deszcz* challenges the widely held beliefs that murder may be justified, and that the murderer is not affected by his deed. So, he can only attempt to distance himself from his memories and

<sup>7</sup> Barbara Skarga, *Kwintet metafizyczny* [Metaphysical Quintet] (Kraków: Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych Universitas, 2009), 118.

<sup>8</sup> Leszek Kołakowski, *Religion: If There is No God-- : on God, the Devil, Sin, and Other Worries of the So-called Philosophy of Religion* (South Bend: St. Augustine’s Press, 2011), 183.



hide behind a higher – historical, communal, ideological – cause. “Marność nad marnościami i wszystko marność” [Vanity of vanities and all is vanity], the narrator repeats in his artificial style. He then adds: “to sięga po jakiś morał, że co byśmy nie przeżywali, to w obrębie spraw nie liczy się to” [some moral is needed; no matter what we experience, it doesn’t really matter]. And then we save ourselves by repeating the mantra “pozostaje tylko deszcz” [only the rain remains] (277). Therefore, the tragedy of individual experiences, subordinated to what is considered more important than human life, does not count.

The landscape hidden behind the rain is actually a CSI – a crime scene investigation – which the reader may investigate but not judge. There are many traces which point to the murderer – not just the shells on the pavement, the weapon, the train tickets – it is above all the dead body, lying still on the pavement. In the past, probably no one was looking for the criminal who somehow “got away with murder” – he did not answer for what he did – but as a consequence he has to constantly (re)tell the story to himself, so that he can at least partially come to terms with the past.

Covering up the crime is a form of (self)defense against undesired and unpleasant traumatic memories – the reader, in turn, must discover the reason for it. Paweł Panas, who described Haupt as a “European exile” – as a stranger who at all times comes face to face with otherness, stated that the writer was aware that he could “fail only if he insisted on the integrity of his former self.”<sup>9</sup> The protagonist of *Deszcz* is also aware of this – he cannot choose only one variant, only one vision of what happened; the story must forever be divided into hypothetical possibilities. Only such an approach to the “former self” who visits a strange town “for no apparent reason” can help one wrestle with life.

The narrator also expresses doubts as to the nature of his message – “czy ma to być tylko rodzaj sygnału, ażeby odbiorca tego dopowiedział sobie kompletniej, czy też opowiadanie to jest moim osobistym, sztucznym językiem” [is it just meant to be a kind of signal so that the reader may fill in the gaps, or is this story my personal, artificial language] (277) – as if not realizing that, as a rule, the text can be both and that the reader may see a (thinly) veiled personal story in a completely different light. Andrzej Niewiadomski argues that a role reversal takes place in Haupt’s prose:

the narrator-protagonist is “playing the part” of the viewer and wanders – and we wander with him – with his eyes along and across the audience, combining love affairs, fatal accidents, storehouses, books of plants and animals, and the constant passage of time neutralized by topography and the painterly and the architectural perspective of “capturing” a moment forever, i.e. seeing everything in terms of “eternal things;” alas, as we are ashamed of what we feel, we are unable to verbalize it, we are unable to talk about it.<sup>10</sup>

It can therefore be concluded that by placing this particular landscape in front of the reader’s eyes, the writer looks at the details – and we look at the details with him – and the scene of

<sup>9</sup> Paweł Panas, „Zygmunt Haupt – europejski wygnaniec” [Zygmunt Haupt – A European Exile], *Konteksty Kultury* 16, vol. 2 (2019): 228.

<sup>10</sup> Andrzej Niewiadomski, “Manierystyczny teatr pamięci jako słownik świata w prozie Zygmunta Haupta” [The mannerist theater of memory as the language of the world in Zygmunt Haupt’s prose], *Acta Humana* 5 (2014): 33.

the crime, arrested forever in the picture, both hides and reveals the overwhelming power of evil and our frail efforts to fight it.

The crime scene – created and cleverly constructed in literature – encourages reflection on spaces contaminated with evil. From the individual perspective of the person who visited it in the past, the spa forever lost its “innocence,” and it must be viewed through the prism of painful experiences, regardless of the number (and the structure) of the veils and the screens employed. In an article devoted to spatial categories in Haupt’s prose, Jerzy Borowczyk and Krzysztof Skibski argue that it is important for the writer

to enter the place imagined in the story; consequently, he believes that the most precious thing that the writer may possess is a “paper ring.” In this context, a paper place (not to be confused with a model!) would be on a par with an actual (physical) place. Even when it is empty.<sup>11</sup>

The empty stage must be filled, and the viewer who is looking at it – even if he is alone – makes the performance possible.

The literary image of the spa out of season – a space and a place made of paper and words – is remarkable; what took place there destroyed the integrity of the protagonist’s memory and the core of his identity. The rain renders this place empty – or almost empty. If only it had been empty that day. If only there were no need to place those figures in the green landscape (re)created from memory (imagination). Ultimately, the paper rain does not have the power to obscure the presence of the characters who destroy the unity and harmony of the picture. Thanks to this, however, we can read this “embodied” story about the causes and effects of evil.

translated by Małgorzata Olsza

<sup>11</sup>Jerzy Borowczyk, Krzysztof Skibski, „Puste miejsca w przestrzeni, puste miejsca w języku. Wokół Miejsca Andrzeja Stasiuka i dwóch opowiadań Zygmunta Haupta” [Empty places in space, empty places in language: Andrzej Stasiuk’s *Miejsce* [Place] and two short stories by Zygmunt Haupt], *Polonistyka. Innowacje* 8 (2018): 188.

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# KEYWORDS

LANDSCAPE

memory

**ABSTRACT:**

The article attempts to offer a new interpretation of Zygmunt Haupt's short story "Deszcz" [The Rain]. The analysis focuses on the literary strategies employed by the Polish writer and the ethical dimension of the short story. The poetics of Haupt's text forces one to reflect on its hidden meanings – the landscape presented in it, recreated in the narrator's memory, inspires a reflection on the human condition in a world of unstable values. Haupt does not impose his own interpretation but encourages the reader to find their own.

e t h i c s

POETICS

PLACE

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# Names of vagueness.

*Deszcz* by Haupt  
and *Little Snow Landscape*  
by Walser: a comparative  
reading

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## 1. Looking askance (at *Deszcz*)

*Deszcz* [Rain] (from *Pierścień z papieru* [Paper ring]) is a short story by Zygmunt Haupt, petite, anamorphous, and rather vague in terms of its genre classification; Miron Białoszewski would probably call it a *tiny extraordinariness*. It has not had much luck in terms of reception by critics and readers, which might be due to its eclectic, heterogeneous structure (although in this case it should interest those who saw Haupt as the precursor of both existentialism and postmodernism), or to its distinctive character compared to his other work. Or perhaps the reason is simple; in the face of such a gem of Polish prose, its extraordinary character, it

is not really possible to multiply exegetical comments. This short story makes readers want to rethink it over and over again, and at the end of this process – fall silent (the temptation is truly hard to resist).

Aleksander Madyda wrote:

In the case of *Deszcz* nothing can be said about the place nor time of action, which stems from the fact that it was meant to be poetic – the poetic descriptions and the atmosphere they create play the most important role in it<sup>1</sup>.

Józef Czapski mentioned *Deszcz* briefly, observing that what he sees as two crucial distinctive characteristics of Haupt's prose – distance and restraint – give “seemingly most trivial experiences such a perspective as if they were already placed in their final, set hierarchy”<sup>2</sup>. This is an accurate observation, however, it does not seem to refer specifically to *Deszcz* (Czapski's paper concerned the whole *Pierścień z papieru*), as no gradation of human experiences can be found in the short story.

Andrzej Stasiuk noted that “the combination of thoughts and things in Haupt's prose creates such a dense network that the powers of reason are hopeless and completely redundant when faced with it”<sup>3</sup>. And if he is correct, then *Deszcz* is a dark spot in Haupt's prose, its counterpoint reverse.

It is impossible to set oneself free from this short story – but this is not because it is soaked, thick with enumeration, and concrete (even if something specific appears in it, it is momentarily blurred). In the story, it is raining – heavily, endlessly and stubbornly – and even though it highlights how green the greenery is, readers will only remember the rain. This is what the narrator wants; like a true deconstructionist he first outlines clear, disturbing visions of the reasons and goal behind his arrival (in “this town”, “on that day”), only to wipe them out, make them phantoms, subject them to the rain. “The only thing I remember – he claims in the conclusion – is that there was such a day, and that it ended, and I returned to the train station, and that I never saw that place again. The only thing I remember is the rain”<sup>4</sup>. And if so, it would seem we have no right to protest or pick anything up from the letters, constantly showered with rain (“simple, fresh, and energetic”, see D 275). Stasiuk observes that “the point of the infinite number of objects listed in Haupt's short story is for them to last”<sup>5</sup>. And in *Deszcz*, what is left is the rain: the non-entity of rain.

<sup>1</sup> Aleksander Madyda, *Haupt. Monografia* [Haupt. A monograph] (Toruń: Wydawnictwo UMK, 2012), 273.

<sup>2</sup> See Józef Czapski, “O Hauptcie” [On Haupt], in Czapski: *Czytając* [Reading] (Kraków: Znak, 1990), 410–411.

<sup>3</sup> Andrzej Stasiuk, “Zygmunt Haupt”, in Stasiuk: *Tekturowy samolot* [Cardboard plane] (Czarne: Wołowiec, 2001), 156.

<sup>4</sup> Zygmunt Haupt, “Deszcz”, in Haupt: *Baskijski diabeł. Opowiadania i reportaże* [Basque devil. Short stories and reportages], edited by Aleksander Madyda (Czarne: Wołowiec, 2017), 278 (henceforth D). Translation mine, PZ.

<sup>5</sup> Stasiuk, 159.

Stasiuk's impression-essay, written in a way truly characteristic of its author, ends with a surprising metaphor:

Zygmunt Haupt's prose is darkness in reverse – it resembles a fire. A fire which leaves behind only bare, scorched earth. His description annihilated everything: people, their deeds and emotions, greenery, animals, cities, villages, history encased in walls, lives of generations encased in objects and utensils, memory and time; he took everything, turned it into smoke and took it away from the world to place it in literature, so that it is preserved there, motionless and more durable than all visible things<sup>6</sup>.

The omnipotent element of Haupt's circumlocution is compared to a metamorphic power of narrative fire, which transforms objects into words in order to save them. This is how tender memory, invention, and creationist power of storytelling work<sup>7</sup>. However, once again, it looks different in *Deszcz*. It is not the reason and rule behind savior-writing that remain at the back, it is not utensils that are rescued from a dying world to be put on the display of the eternal clarity of language. No, the foreground is taken by an element. This element purifies like fire, but by washing things rather than transforming them. "These could be very important matters, with serious consequences. And yet the only thing I remember from that time is rain" (D 277). Rain broke into pieces, and so did the world's construction. Rain also covered oblivion – all matters, bigger and smaller. Rain is the only thing left. Like a canticle.

But is this true? Is it possible that this is how we are supposed to read this short story? Or perhaps we are led by the nose, missing something significant, the gist of *Deszcz*, the key to its meaning? The deconstructionist narrator undermines the validity of the story he tells, he is uncertain, he multiplies questions. "What is it supposed to be about? What damn message does it carry? What is it supposed to be?" (D 277). This is unlike other works by Haupt, suggesting some flirtatiousness of the narrator, that the only worthwhile thing is to get carried away by the vagueness of rain into the gutter oblivion.

This function of the titular rain blurs one of the main directives of the work of memory in Haupt's prose. As Tomasz Mizerkiewicz aptly observed in his extrapolation of the counter-march metaphor from *Meine liebe Mutter...*, the stake of preserving one detail in memory is evoking the past *in extensor* and for an eternal, literary return<sup>8</sup>. However, looking at *Deszcz*

<sup>6</sup> Stasiuk, 163.

<sup>7</sup> I generally agree with the line of reasoning within which Haupt is seen as an heir to Proust, an author who – to use a phrase from Rafał Wojaczek's poem – "believes that he will find", who does not doubt the realness and nameability of the world. Even if he has the sense of transforming the visible into the verbal, reality into language, it does not diminish the sense of "preserving the world" (see e.g. the interpretation of the "paper ring" metaphor: Tomasz Mizerkiewicz, "Proza Zygmunta Haupta – problem uwagi" [Zygmunt Haupt's prose – the attention issue], in: *Jestem bardzo niefortunnym wyborem*. *Studia i szkice o twórczości Zygmunta Haupta* [I am a very unfortunate choice. Studies and papers on works by Zygmunt Haupt], edited by Andrzej Niewiadomski, Paweł Panas [Lublin: Wydawnictwo UMCS, 2018], 22). Maciej Nowak aptly concludes that "aware of his entanglement in the pre-set order of cognition, as well as the mechanisms that govern verbal expression, Haupt nonetheless does not doubt the world which he experiences and which he tries to tell" (Maciej Nowak, "Właściwie niewypowiedziane Haupta i jego konsekwencje" [Haupt's proper untold and its consequences], in: *Jestem bardzo niefortunnym wyborem*, 36).

<sup>8</sup> Mizerkiewicz, 16–17.



also from this perspective we may come to a conclusion that this specific rain blurs any clarity of “some town”, all reasons and goals of coming there disappear, faces of the people met there fade, ambitions and plans are lost, and we are only left with the knowledge that there was such a day, because there must have been (just as 16 May 1973 in a poem by Szymborska), but the only thing left from is this incessant rain.

Although it is this vagueness<sup>9</sup> that undermines the potentially autobiographic character of *Deszcz*<sup>10</sup>, it is difficult not to suspect that the narrator is like a spokesperson of the author, and so we should pay attention to what he says.

Jakub Lubelski concludes his detailed summary of *Deszcz* with the following statement: “It would seem that *Deszcz* is only about the rain”<sup>11</sup>. Or is it? Maybe (as Lubelski himself observes) it is some sort of a code, a private *volapük* which demands a solution – which is hardly possible (or even impossible<sup>12</sup>) due to the idiomatic character of such an individual, perfectly concise, closed language? Thus we should look through the text, peek behind the curtain of rain... Where we will only see aporias and forks which force us to stop and make an impossible choice where to go next.

In terms of the relationship between epistemology and phenomenology in Haupt’s works, Andrzej Niewiadomski made an apt observation that in *Deszcz* the vision of the vagueness of human experience, which stems from mutually exclusive reasons behind the protagonist’s arrival, results in rejecting any essentialism: “If attempts at discovering the «essence» do not bring the desired effects, Haupt’s protagonist resorts to the topographic concrete”<sup>13</sup>. As Haupt’s readers we are led towards objects and facts which sparkle and resonate in his various works – but not in the world of *Deszcz*, ruled by the sudden, momentary entropy<sup>14</sup> of any ontology; common rain functions as the reverse of epiphany.

<sup>9</sup> Andrzej Stasiuk argues that this characteristic of Haupt’s prose transforms some of his works into universal parables: “his obsession with memory is significant: names, objects, landscape. For example, in *Deszcz* we do not know where we are, but a three-page-long description of rain sends shivers down the spine. This could be taking place anywhere...” (“Czytam tylko Haupta [I only read Haupt]». Z Andrzejem Stasiukiem rozmawia Michał Sowiński [An interview with Andrzej Stasiuk by Michał Sowiński]”, *Tygodnik Powszechny* 13.09.2015; <https://www.tygodnikpowszechny.pl/czytam-tylko-haupta-30124>, date of access: 11.05.2020). I think that in this short story we are dealing with suspended primacy of memory, with memory *à rebours*, a treaty on not-remembering.

<sup>10</sup> See e.g. Aleksander Madyda, *Zygmunt Haupt. Życie i twórczość literacka* [Zygmunt Haupt. Life and literary work] (Toruń: Wydawnictwo UMK, 1998), 133–140.

<sup>11</sup> Jakub Lubelski, *Zygmunt Haupta porzucanie literackości* [Zygmunt Haupt’s abandonment of literariness], <https://teologiapolityczna.pl/jakub-lubelski-zygmunta-haupta-porzucanie-literackosci>, date of access: 15.05.2020.

<sup>12</sup> See Jagoda Wierzejska, “Nietota, czyli Melancholia Erotica. O funkcji niektórych motywów folklorystycznych w prozie Zygmunta Haupta” [Nietota, i.e. Melancholia Erotica. On the function of some folk motifs in Zygmunt Haupt’s prose], *Tekstualia* 2 (2010): 118.

<sup>13</sup> Andrzej Niewiadomski, “Przestrzenie Zygmunta Haupta (Rekonosans)” [Zygmunt Haupt’s spaces (a reconnaissance)], *Roczniki Humanistyczne* z. 1 (2018): 174.

<sup>14</sup> And perhaps this is one of those rules of Haupt’s writig which works well also in *Deszcz* – see Dorota Utracka, “Aliniowość, rozpad, chaos, czyli o tekstowych figurach entropii w prozie Zygmunta Haupta” [Alinearity, disintegration, chaos – textual figures of entropy in Zygmunt Haupt’s prose], in: *Efekt motyla. Humanisci wobec teorii chaosu* [Butterfly effect. Humanists and the theory of chaos], edited by Kordian Bakula, Dorota Heck (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 2009).

Obviously other properties of the poetics of Haupt's prose, especially inconclusiveness and narrative infiniteness<sup>15</sup>, highlighted both through the reconstructionist activity of the narrator, and a peculiar self-dispersion of plots, all have an anti-essential dimension. Moreover, Haupt's tendency to use frequent variability in his works, repeating and rejecting once established configurations, lowers the uniformity of the picture of the world, secret formulas and regularities extracted from reality. But such things do not concern *Deszcz*, ruled by "uncertain certainty" of the narrator, who – lulled by the rain – reduces all possibilities of the shape of the past to "an unfathomable essence of a seemingly banal phenomenon which is the opposite to any diversity"<sup>16</sup>.

And so these could be very important matters, genuinely fateful. And yet the only thing I remember from that time is the rain. Green, silver, splashing like mercury, I remember the grey of that rain among the greenery, monotony, and some weird freshness of that rain, and I do not remember anything else (D 277).

In *Przeciw entropii, przeciw arkadii* [Against entropy, against arcadia] Andrzej Niewiadomski writes that "peculiarity" (as Haupt's leitmotif) which seems to play the main role in *Deszcz*, is "related to elusiveness", "guarantees an authentic contact between man and reality", and highlights the significance and role of the specific<sup>17</sup>. The latter characteristic of Haupt's prose is also mentioned by Mizerkiewicz in his concluding remarks, where he observes that for Haupt materiality is the stake in the game for truth, whose uncovering is about unintentionally repeating material signs and transforming them into "signs of art"<sup>18</sup>.

Having outlined several aspects of Haupt's short story (to which we shall return), now let us move on to Robert Walser.

## 2. Robert Walser's prose – possibility of a dialogue with *Deszcz*

There is no doubt regarding Robert Walser's popularity in Poland: the Polish translation of *The Tanners* has been out of print for many years (it is only available second-hand at a very

<sup>15</sup>See e.g. Stanisław Wawrzyniec Zając, "Jak czytać Haupta? Prowokacja interpretacyjna" [How to read Haupt? An interpretative provocation], in: *Paradygmat pamięci w kulturze* [Memory paradigm in culture], edited by Andrzej Borkowski, Marcin Pliszka, Artur Ziótek (Siedlce: Wydawnictwo Akademii Podlaskiej, 2005), 321; Nowak, 24. Krzysztof Rutkowski expressed this property of Haupt's prose in the simplest terms when he observed that Haupt "would like to tell the world's entirety, but he is sentenced to a fragment and combining pieces, always unfinished" (Krzysztof Rutkowski, "W stronę Haupta" [Towards Haupt], *Teksty Drugie* 1-2 [1991]: 122).

<sup>16</sup>Andrzej Niewiadomski, "Ja, Zygmunt z Roksolanii. O gatunkowej nieprzejrzystości prozy Haupta" [I, Zygmunt from Roksolania. On the lack of genre clarity in Haupt's prose], in: „*Jestem bardzo niefortunnym wyborem*”, 90.

<sup>17</sup>Andrzej Niewiadomski, *Przeciw entropii, przeciw arkadii. O pisarstwie Zygmunta Haupta* [Against entropy, against arcadia. On Zygmunt Haupt's prose] (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Instytutu Literatury, 2021), 41. In his earlier paper on Haupt Niewiadomski draws a precise map of semantic properties of this "weirdness", additionally observing that in Haupt it means: 1) unknown, alien; 2) hybrid; 3) "artificial"; 4) pathological, he determines "strategies for expressing chaos" ("*Jeden jest zawsze ostrzem*"). *Inna nowoczesność Zygmunta Haupta* [One is always a blade. A different modernity of Zygmunt Haupt] [Lublin: Wydawnictwo UMCS, 2015], 139), and finally, "weirdness" functions as a trope of "suspension and inconclusiveness" (Niewiadomski, „*Jeden jest zawsze ostrzem*”, 156).

<sup>18</sup>Mizerkiewicz, 22.

high price); many Polish readers consider Walser an outstanding, or even cult writer<sup>19</sup>. In the light of this popularity, there surprisingly few critical studies of his prose: although the first Polish translation of *The Assistant* by Teresa Jętkiewicz was published in 1972, within the prestigious series Library of twentieth-century masterpieces by Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, there have only been 30-40 critical studies to date, mostly short reviews rather than profound analyses. Even if we add to that several interpreters (Jętkiewicz, Łukasiewicz, Musiał, Żychliński), a micromonograph<sup>20</sup>, several faithful critics<sup>21</sup>, two conferences (Raławice 1990, Opole 2018) – the Polish landscape of Walser’s reception seems rather modest<sup>22</sup>.

It is difficult to answer why this is the case. Of course we could say that this is an elite writer, outside of the mainstream, trendy styles or tendencies, peculiar, impossible to be referred or reduced to any other work; a master of balancing on the line between naïveté and realism, irony and seriousness, elusiveness and the old-fashioned – in short, an author that has to seduce readers are able to adjust their sensitivity register to his own. Perhaps this is the reason why it is easier for Walser to have his “followers”, admirers of his incredible talent rather than a wide circle of readers and scholars. This also seems to be how Jerzy Łukosz likely saw it when writing about the specificity of Walser’s presence among readers over two decades ago:

The exclusive “clan” of Robert Walser consists of a few experts, scholars who guard the helpless author against editorial and translational incompetence. A “clan” is a rare addition to a book, it emerges spontaneously around the work of authors treated with special care, authors who are spiritually exposed, who escape the norms of scholarly procedures, negating the standards of alien literary cultures, grown-up children of literature and its saints – like Robert Walser<sup>23</sup>.

It would seem that this diversity and durability of reception should be guaranteed by the peculiar “ahistoricity” of Walser’s prose (although it is somewhat difficult to detach his work from criticism of bourgeois culture). And if Walser’s prose is dominated by universality, it should – to use Białoszewski’s words – “fit everything”... However, this did not happen – or at least, not in Poland. If we take a closer *en bloc* look at the composition of texts on Walser,

<sup>19</sup>In terms of evidence for fascination with Walser’s prose we should mention: Maja Jurkowska, “W cieniu zapomnienia i w blasku sławy” [In the shadow of oblivion and the light of fame], *Twórczość* 6 (1994): 146–147; Urszula Kozioł, “O Robercie Walserze” [On Robert Walser], *Odra* 10 (2003): 96; Michał Paweł Markowski, “Ślady na śniegu” [Traces in snow], in Markowski: *Kiwka* [Dribbling], (Kraków: Znak, 2015); Łukasz Musiał, “Bez troska albo najmniejszy pisarz świata (zamiast kilku słów na koniec)” [Carefreeness or world’s smallest author (instead of a few words at the end)], in Musiał: *Do czego używa się literatury?* [What is literature used for?] (Kraków: Fundacja Tygodnika Powszechnego, 2016), 111–115.

<sup>20</sup>Małgorzata Łukasiewicz, *Robert Walser* (Warszawa: Czytelnik, 1990).

<sup>21</sup>Małgorzata Łukasiewicz and Łukasz Musiał wrote about Walser the most in terms of volume and frequency. Their works – both significant and elaborate – are beyond the scope of this paper, and so the presentation of their ideas will be reduced to key theses. Łukasiewicz’s Walser and Musiał’s Walser – these topics probably deserve separate, interesting studies.

<sup>22</sup>And if we observed that most Polish studies on Walser were written after the publication of Polish editions of his so-called small prose due to great translational efforts of Małgorzata Łukasiewicz, from *Przechadzki* [Strolls] (Warszawa: Świat Literacki, 1990) to *Niedzielny spacer* [Sunday walk] (Warszawa: Świat Literacki, 2005) this scene of Walser’s reception would seem even smaller.

<sup>23</sup>Jerzy Łukosz, “Człowiek czyli sługa. O pisarstwie Roberta Walsera” [Man, i.e. a servant. On Robert Walser’s prose], *Twórczość* 4 (1997): 70.

and especially on their initial and final formulas, we will notice that almost all contain remarks regarding both his genius, and... being completely forgotten<sup>24</sup>. Thus a large portion of studies devoted to Walser open with a critical-literary “level zero”: replaying a legend that is both complex and petrified<sup>25</sup>, Walser’s biography and pointing out – typically in an imitative way – his favorite literary motifs (a stroll as a form of “life-writing”, all topoi of modesty, diminishing and disappearing, recluse protagonists, who always feel lost, and whose sensitivity does not allow them to feel at home in the world of “the great number”, or extraordinary concentration on smallest details).

Let us list the most important motifs in Walser’s works which would allow us to outline a common ground with Haupt. First of all, as argued by Małgorzata Łukasiewicz, Walser’s prose takes place outside of conventions, it is open, almost deprived of “composition rules”. Secondly, Łukasiewicz observes that Walser’s prose is set in some vague present determined by “a moment” experienced ecstatically by his protagonists (analogically, in Haupt we would deal with ecstatic moment made present), which makes Walser’s plots seem like collections of isolated moments; fragments of Walser’s descriptions and short stories are thus thrown in a peculiar timelessness of linguistic presentation.

A moment is the proper time in Walser’s prose. His fictional characters – or perhaps the role in which he appears – seem to exist only in this short moment, they are characterized exclusively by the psychological ability to experience or evoke experiences, they do not have a past<sup>26</sup>.

Thirdly, it is said here that Walser’s protagonists “are uncertain of their status in the world”<sup>27</sup>, multiplying (in earnest, but naively) existential questions, constructing their microworld *vitae contemplative* they try to set themselves free from the burden of the bourgeois order (social, economic, cultural)<sup>28</sup>.

Maja Jurkowska’s paper is an interesting attempt at outlining sensual qualities in Walser, such as: 1) Walser’s look, “somewhat melancholic and soft, but certain”<sup>29</sup>; 2) his style – compared to a court dance on the grounds of its finesse, elegance, discretion and delicateness<sup>30</sup>;

<sup>24</sup>Małgorzata Łukasiewicz opens her paper entitled *Mała scena* [Small stage] with: “For some Robert Walser is the favorite author (or at least he is among favorite authors), and for others – an unknown one” (Małgorzata Łukasiewicz, „Mała scena”, in Łukasiewicz: *Rubryka pod różą* [A rubric under a rose] [Kraków: Znak, 2007], 42). See also: Maja Jurkowska, “Robert Walser – szaleństwo bycia nikim” [The madness of being nobody], *Twórczość* 10 (1995): 122; Maja Jurkowska, “W cieniu zapomnienia i w blasku sławy” [In the shadow of oblivion and the limelight of fame], 147.

<sup>25</sup>Jan Koprowski believes that the biographical and autothematic material is the biggest incentive to reading Walser; his critical paper “Życie na marginesie” [Life in the margin] (*Literatura* 34 [1979]) is actually a summary of Carl Seelig’s *Wanderungen mit Robert Walser* (1957) – Koprowski cites (in his own translations) Walser’s statements about the essence of social-literary life, writing, old age and alcoholism.

<sup>26</sup>Małgorzata Łukasiewicz, “Roberta Walsera przechadzki” [Robert Walser’s strolls], *Literatura na Świecie* 8 (1975): 169.

<sup>27</sup>Łukasiewicz, “Roberta Walsera przechadzki”.

<sup>28</sup>Łukasiewicz, “Roberta Walsera przechadzki”, 170–171. Marian Holona, who was probably the first to compare Walser to Kafka on the grounds of their criticism of the bourgeois lifestyle, echoes Małgorzata Łukasiewicz in this respect (Marian Holona, “Minimalizm Roberta Walsera” [Robert Walser’s minimalism], *Literatura na Świecie* 8 [1975]: 5).

<sup>29</sup>Jurkowska, “Robert Walser – szaleństwo bycia nikim”, 123.

<sup>30</sup>See Jurkowska, “Robert Walser – szaleństwo bycia nikim”.

3) the main figure – a stroll which carries both a contestation of the bourgeois lifestyle and contemplative comfort which stems from experiencing nature, which in turn leads Walser's protagonists to a sense of "reconciliation and oblivion" as Jurkowska aptly puts it<sup>31</sup>. Jurkowska generally sees Walser's prose as reconciling contradictions: excessive acts undertaken by his protagonists are supposed to conjure a certain state of existential distance, to put something in brackets, which gives them permission to be unauthentic.

The most interesting studies into Walser's prose were published following the publications of volumes of his "small prose": *Dziwne miasto* [This Strange Town] (Warsaw 2001) and *Mały krajobraz ze śniegiem* [Little snow landscape] (Warsaw 2003). Those studies include: Jakub Ekier, *Tekst jako wyjście* [Text as a starting point] ("Literatura na Świecie" 2003, No 7/8), Piotr Herbich, *Prosastuecke* ("Nowe Książki" 2002, No 5), Piotr Kajewski, *Nie trać otuchy* [Do not get disheartened], ("Odra" 2003, No 3), and Adam Wiedemann, *Homilia*, ("Res Publica Nowa" 2002, No 8).

Following Łukasiewicz's line of thought, Ekier situates Walser among European geniuses of prose who prefer *poiesis* over reproducing, which is manifested in Walser's works both in the "non-transparent narrative convention", and in how the represented world is organized, subjected to the rule of constructing the space-time *in statu nascendi et scribendi*: "Walser's text is the same as the act of its creation, like a territory that unfolds as one walks deeper inside it"<sup>32</sup>. Hence writing corresponds with the rhythm of the protagonist-narrator's stroll, which creates the textual reality that lasts as long as both the stroll and writing are happening. The subject of this prose (and the reader closely following every step) is thus accompanied by the incessant "sense that in a moment they – together with their world-text – will stop talking, and so stop existing"<sup>33</sup>.

An autoironic game is both a signature and seal of such a strategy<sup>34</sup>. This is a game which a narrator of such a prose plays with themselves (in front of readers), and which manifests itself via: 1) multiple and changeable narrators and protagonists who accept their completely fictional and ephemeral status; 2) the narrative convention (established via strictly defined initial formulas, such as: "I imagine...", "everything will be very strange...", etc.), which triggers clear, ostentatious fictionality; 3) "pseudopunchlines", "plot disruptions" which result from evanescence, insignificance, blandness of events in the story alluded by the narrator, which at some point are simply cut, which blurs the significance of events and images presented in the story<sup>35</sup>.

Based on all that Ekier draws an ontological conclusion, seeing Walser as an author who foreshadows existential philosophy, opens space for a deconstructionist game, and even draws the horizon of religious experiences of a clearly Buddhist provenance:

<sup>31</sup>Jurkowska, "Robert Walser – szaleństwo bycia nikim".

<sup>32</sup>Jakub Ekier, "Tekst jako wyjście", *Literatura na Świecie* 7/8 (2003): 418.

<sup>33</sup>Ekier, 420.

<sup>34</sup>Ekier's observations resemble those by Bialik and Koprowski regarding the theatrical status of the represented reality in Walser's prose (Ekier, 417–418; Piotr Kajewski, "Nie trać otuchy", *Odra* 3 [2003]: 80).

<sup>35</sup>Ekier, 414–417, 423.

No thoughts, i.e. no vision of sense, only existence, the fact that there is “this and that”. An intensifying sense of emptiness, nothingness even, seems to simultaneously suggest that the text will end soon, followed only by clean white pages up until the next specimen of miniature prose<sup>36</sup>.

Adam Wiedemann presents an interesting comparative perspective, trying to (if only for a moment) forget about the idiomaticity of Walser’s prose; eager to encourage Polish readers, he outlines the following trajectories for comparisons:

I would situate Walser somewhere halfway between Natasza Goerke (Walser is more “specific”) and Miron Białoszewski (Walser has more “fancifulness”). They are all characterized by a tendency to intellectual flippancy, which allows them to put complex and dangerous issues in a few obnoxiously apt words. And perhaps also the conviction that everyone is both obvious and inscrutable, that those two qualities are not mutually exclusive – to the contrary, they work very well with each other<sup>37</sup>.

I hope that this brief review of some characteristics of Walser’s prose will encourage numerous further comparative studies of those two great authors who are actually only being discovered. The following sections are one of such strolls.

### 3. *Deszcz* and *Little snow landscape* – two names for vagueness

Andrzej Niewiadomski observed – aptly and succinctly – that in Haupt, being means being a newcomer<sup>38</sup>. This mode of existence of protagonists is probably the strongest connection between Haupt and Walser. This is where this sense of “peculiarity” stems from – both reality and existence. Narrators sometimes highlight this peculiarity of themselves being “newcomers” and thus strangers, and sometimes they cover it with language and sensitivity through which they look at the world. They construct their descriptions in such a way as to make the reality – which they observe and experience (and by which they are ruled) – seem like inscrutable, full of contradictions, incomprehensible or vague.

“Only rain will be left from all that” (D 277) – the protagonist of *Deszcz* insists before putting forward numerous hypotheses regarding the supposed meaning of the mysterious reality of some vague town, encompassed and covered with rain, which he visits on a certain morning. Walser’s protagonist says something similar: “Everything is covered, evened out, weakened.

<sup>36</sup>Ekier, 420.

<sup>37</sup>Adam Wiedemann, “Homilia”, *Res Publica Nowa* 8 (2002): 81.

<sup>38</sup>Niewiadomski, “*Jeden jest zawsze ostrzem*”, 178.

Where there was diversity, now there is only one thing: snow”<sup>39</sup>. Rain and snow cover everything with a thick blanket which highlights the experience of opacity and vagueness. The two protagonists react differently: Walser’s experiences childish, ecstatic joy<sup>40</sup>, Haupt’s is overcome by incomprehensible shaking, but generally his experience is dominated by a sense of “peculiar freshness” brought about by the “silver, splashing like mercury” rain which “wipes everything away”; nonetheless, in both stories the final *crescendo* sounds similar – not much is left by our existence: uncertain identity that breaks down, a sense of peculiar vagueness of existence, a mysterious, opaque reality.

Haupt provides numerous versions of what might have happened to his protagonist in the unknown town on that day, what brought him there, ultimately making everything, all the “historicity” insignificant, whereas Walser leaves his readers with a feeling that events are peripheral, insignificant, temporary (as a result of the “snow effect”); when the narrator discovers this property of all experience, he feels free and joyful, almost like a child. We can see it best in another short story in which snow plays the main role:

Next I came across a peculiar, unexpected obstacle. Two huge fir trees, fallen in a storm, were lying across the narrow path and blocked it with their branches. However, I boldly paved my way through them. It was already getting dark in the magically white forest. I went downhill, wading through snow, as if I was sitting at a table to have dinner. I pulled myself together, laughed, and picked up the pace on my way home” (*Little snow landscape*, MKS 155).

The two short stories differ in terms of mood and tense of narration. Haupt’s protagonist gives an account of the “weirder adventure” (*vide* initializations of Gombrowicz’s late prose) from his past, he experiences the annihilating character of rain. Rain wipes away all meaning, and by existing in spite of human memory, it questions the human ability to tell coherent stories. Thus it also questions the narrator’s ability to construct and express his own uniform identity. By insisting on the illusion of simultaneity of his own experience and writing (via present-tense narration), Walser’s narrator kills off his protagonist, whom he capriciously brought to life just a paragraph earlier, and now he buries him under snow, where – according to the narrator – he is to experience “peace and quiet”, he shall feel “at home”<sup>41</sup>.

<sup>39</sup>Robert Walser, “Little snow landscape”, in Walser: *Mały krajobraz ze śniegiem. Małe poematy. Utwory prozą. Mała proza* [Little landscape with snow. Little poems. Prose. Little prose], translated into Polish by Małgorzata Łukasiewicz (Warszawa: Świat Literacki, 2003), 261. (Henceforth this edition will be marked Ś; later in this paper I will refer to other short stories from that volume, and so it will be marked MKS). Translation into English mine, PZ.

<sup>40</sup>This happens not only in the micro short story *Snow*, but also in other fragmentary prose with the snow leitmotif. The protagonist of *Little landscape with snow* rejoices at the sight of rooftops covered with snow with Nikifor-like flippancy, so to say: “It looked so delicious, so tempting, so joyful and pleasant, like a sophisticated, sweet masterpiece of a skilled confectioner” (*Mały krajobraz ze śniegiem*, MKS 93). Translation into English mine, PZ.

<sup>41</sup>This scene could be added the register of fragments of Walser’s short story, which Michał P. Markowski lists in his excellent essay on the phenomenon of insignificance of Walser’s “life writing”, discussing the emblem of the moment of Walser’s death (he died on 25 December 1956, during a winter walk, his body was found deep under snow...). See Markowski, 189–198. Translation mine, PZ.

Haupt talks about the enigma of rain which blurs the contours of memory focused on registering the essence of experiencing, matters taking place between people; the world of *Deszcz* ultimately boils down to what the human eye has preserved, to certain images (painting- or perhaps more photograph-like), this world shines only with a silver stream of water pouring from the sky and the lush green of the landscape highlighted by the rain. It seems that this is the point when Haupt's and Walser's visions meet. In Walser the snowstorm brings the value and significance of the world – there is no point resisting it, eventually snow covers everything, the lightness of the white veil encloses everything that existed before, it is time of motionlessness, persistence, lightness (Walser and his protagonists want to “set themselves free from the weight of earthly life, they want to peacefully pass on to the kingdom of greater freedom”<sup>42</sup>). Walser's “now” stops, shrinks, reduces itself to one tear rolling down the cheek of the protagonist's widow. Haupt's “past” is one rainy day in some town. And although that day passed, the protagonist learns a lesson on the insignificance of human attempts and struggles, and the protagonist speaks from a perspective located anywhere outside the world, as Baudelaire would see it. Both of them, having their experiences irrevocably blighted, become dispossessed of their heretofore existence. Bearing in mind Walser's dream of “insignificant existence”, we might as well say that they meet at some point which may become a starting point. We should also pay attention to the question of narrative infiniteness present in short stories by both authors. Walser wrote that “it is snowing without a beginning and without an end”, thus situating his short story in some literary timelessness, which actually resembles what stretches beyond the plot events in *Deszcz*; this is probably another structural analogy between the works of Walser and Haupt which deserves its own study.

It is time for the decisive argument. Although I may be misled by my intuition, I think the boldness and intriguing character of this trope is worth the risk. So far we have identified what I believe to be key elements which are striking in Walser's and Haupt's short stories: vagueness of reality and a sense of finding oneself outside the (comprehensible/organized) world. I would say that especially the former plays the major role in both short stories.

There is a large body of literature on vagueness<sup>43</sup>, but it interests me not as a construction element in literature but as its effect and way of presenting being-in-the-world. I believe that aesthetics and Asian philosophy (especially Chinese) can be an intriguing context for both short stories. Most commentators of Haupt will probably bridle: his prose seems to be against entropy and emptiness, it is salvation and rejecting disappearing. However, once we remember what Niewiadomski wrote – that peculiarity present in Haupt functions also

<sup>42</sup>W.G. Sebald, “Le promeneur solitaire. Pamięci Roberta Walsera” [In memoriam of Robert Walser], in Sebald; *Opis nieszczęścia. Eseje o literaturze* [Description of unhappiness. Essays on literature], translated into Polish by Małgorzata Łukasiewicz, afterword by Arkadiusz Żychliński (Wrocław: Ossolineum, 2019): 238. Translation mine, PZ.

<sup>43</sup>Brygida Pawłowska-Jądrzyk's book *Uczta pod wiszącą skałą. Metafizyczność i nieokreśloność w sztuce (nie tylko literackiej)* [Feast at the Hanging Rock. Metaphysicality and vagueness in art (not only literature)] (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo UKSW, 2011): 11–14 organizes many aspects of vagueness. However, my considerations will follow a different path, because I do not find “vague thoughts” – motifs characteristic for Western art – in Haupt and Walser; vagueness in their works does not seem to be “an artistic quality resulting from applying measures which in a way answer inexpressibility” (Pawłowska-Jądrzyk, 11) either.



as a plot element which causes suspension and insolubility of sense<sup>44</sup> – we will see not only the deconstructionist or postmodern character of his prose, but also metaphysical, spiritual. It is similar in the case of Walser; although he is seldom accused of religiousness, this does not allay suspicions that the organizing worldview of his narrator (especially in his small prose), which dominates in *This strange town* – the theme of lessening, gradual fading of existence<sup>45</sup> – may lead readers towards e.g. the Buddhist experience of emptiness, the mystical expropriation of “I”. And although it would be difficult to find specific tropes in Walser’s text which would legitimize such claims, such as declarations, inclinations, or at least allusions to religious systems and texts, it would nonetheless be difficult to deny that those motifs (gradual uncovering of nothingness which both encompasses an entity and exists inside it, a predilection to indicating negligibility as the basic property of things, consistent belittling of own “I”) invariably suggest metaphysical connotations.

And so the opacity of own construction and vagueness of the world (triggered by rain and snow, i.e. water falling from the sky) brings to mind experiencing vagueness present in the Chinese word *dan* and the centuries-long artistic tradition related to it. According to François Jullien, pseudonymization and metaphorical practice need to be applied in order to identify this experience, to make it a theme of expression; a word is simultaneously a state (e.g. in Taoism, Confucianism, Buddhism) because it does not subject itself to interpretative procedures and definitions. To describe them, one needs to refrain from excessive specificity – in fact, one can only get closer to it, but never prove or explain what a bland flavor, sound, or meaning is<sup>46</sup>.

Transformations which took place in Chinese literature (especially in poetry) tended to highlight the experience of emptiness illustrated via words. In poetry, creating specific ambiance which would allow readers to experience a sense of transgressing the materiality of things, reception of meaning which is always evanescent and distant, never clear<sup>47</sup>, became the basic criterion of perfection in poetry. According to Jullien, Chinese vagueness resists metaphysics, and hence searching for connections or references to Western art needs to be careful and restrained<sup>48</sup>, mostly due to the fact that Chinese blandness calls for a change in lifestyle; *dan* expresses the rejection of «I»<sup>49</sup>. And thus – as I have already mentioned – Walser’s prose will be much closer to this kind of experience than Haupt’s short story.

<sup>44</sup>Niewiadomski, “*Jeden jest zawsze ostrzem*”, 156.

<sup>45</sup>See e.g. Musiał, 112–114.

<sup>46</sup>François Jullien, *In praise of blandness. Proceeding from Chinese Thought and Aesthetics*, translated into Polish by Beata Szymańska, Anna Sieczyńska-Śpiewak (Kraków: Wydawnictwo UJ, 2006): 10.

<sup>47</sup>Jullien, 67.

<sup>48</sup>In this respect, Jullien cites the works by Jean-Pierre Richard from the Geneva School of Literary Criticism who finds distant echoes of vagueness in Verlaine in his *Poésie et profondeur* (see Jullien, 116–118; Jean-Pierre Richard, “Verlaine’s Blandness”, in Richard: *Poezja i głębia*, translation and afterword by Tomasz Swoboda [Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo Słowo/Obraz Terytoria, 2008]: 121–124), which manifest themselves in remarks on quiet and emptiness. Jullien concludes that «Verlaine’s man» is completely enchanted by blandness of «disappearing existence». Verlaine’s blandness as *muffling* or *fading* reveals the beauty of the process of disappearing rather than the beauty of fullness (Jullien, 117). The subject of Verlaine’s poems cannot last long in this state, threatened by atrophy, tension of senses, enchantment, but also anxiety of awareness. What is missing is the liberating sense of potentiality and ambiguity, which are characteristic for art and experiencing blandness of East Asia (Jullien, 118).

<sup>49</sup>Jullien, 116.

Analyzing the style of various Chinese painting schools, Jullien observed some characteristic motifs of imaging which inspire vagueness in recipients. Impressions from “reading” vague landscapes by Ni Zan (one of great masters from the Yuan period) led Jullien to the conclusion that gouaches and lithographs of landscapes are dominated by the following qualities: 1) calmness; 2) monotony; 3) clarity; 4) weightlessness; 5) lack of specific motifs or conditioning<sup>50</sup>. Jullien concludes that such a landscape contains all landscapes in which everything melts down and mixes<sup>51</sup>.

In *Deszcz* the landscape is covered with a silver coat of rain from the very beginning, which highlights the lush summer greenery. Colors seem to be the only real thing. Likewise in *Snowstorm* Walser separates the protagonist from the rest of the world using a thick, tight curtain of snow. Regardless of the form in which it appears, water blurs reality (although it does not make it fade like Chinese gouaches, it still renders reality illegible) and becomes the vehicle of vagueness.

Let us compare two analogous “moments”:

When I arrived there early in the morning, it was already raining. It was a warm summer day, and there was actually nothing wrong with it, except for the rain. It was green: the bright green of early summer, light, silvery – silvery due to the curtain of grey rain. I was to spend the whole day there, and later, when I had got used to that rain, as if it belonged to the landscape, as if there was not supposed to be anything but rain. I remember the greenery of that place, as if that greenery was like paint dissolved by the rain which then stained everything green. Before I said: a foul day. But no, it was not foul. There was something fresh and lively in that rain: it was raining straight, not slanting, lying vertically on that green landscape made from the green of trees (D 275).

It is snowing, snowing to the full capacity, and there is a lot of capacity. It never stops, it is snowing without a beginning or an end. There is no sky any more, only the grey-white blizzard. There is no air any more, it is covered with snow. There is no earth any more, it is hidden under snow. There is snow on rooftops, streets, and trees. It is snowing on everything. Everything that is standing, moving, crawling, running, and hopping is momentarily buried under snow. Roads, walls, tree branches, poles, rails, fields, hills, and God knows what else – everything is white. And it keeps snowing, diligently and conscientiously, and it seems it has no intention of stopping. All colors, red, green, brown, and blue – they are all covered by whiteness. Everything is covered, evened out, weakened. Where there was diversity, now there is only one thing: snow. And where opposites were clashing, there is unanimity: snow. Various phenomena and shapes are blissfully and harmoniously joined in the only one countenance, the only one pensive whole<sup>52</sup> (Ś 260–261).

<sup>50</sup>Jullien, 20, 107–109.

<sup>51</sup>Jullien, 20.

<sup>52</sup>Translation mine, PZ.

Of course the two scenes share the same final effect: rain and snow both have a total, all-encompassing character, they wipe away, cover (snow), dissolve (rain) the landscape, making it a plan canvas tightly covered with white/green. “As if nothing else was supposed to be”.

The covered/dissolved reality presented in such a total way (using a number of enumerations – just as Haupt – Walser tries to convince the reader that the snow worked methodically, ruthlessly, unconditionally, and irrevocably, covering absolutely everything; Haupt draws his pen as if it was a stream of rain – one careless stroke crosses out what may have been defined in the landscape) inspires vagueness. The register of reaching this state resembles a ritualistic act revoking the very gesture of creation, it is creation *à rebours*, a return – like in primary rituals – until the first non-differentiation. I believe that it is similar in the case of aesthetic experience of vagueness in the Far Eastern philosophy, when things become uniform, when they lose their individual characteristics, blur differences, and strive towards coming together, becoming one<sup>53</sup>. And this results in experiencing absence: forms appear only to disappear moments later, they open themselves to what is distant, beyond them<sup>54</sup>.

The fact that both in Haupt and Walser it is water that inspires vagueness is also interesting – and convergent with Chinese aesthetics. According to Jullien, Chinese “blandness” is rendered with water’s clarity, the foundation of all flavors. This peculiar conversion leads consciousness to the *roots* of reality, to its *center*, from which all things stem. This path leads inside (towards what is simple, natural, the essence of things), detachment (from what is special, individual, coincidental). This transcendence does not open itself to a different world, it is experienced in this world as pure immanence<sup>55</sup>.

The narrators’ reaction to being thrown into vagueness is also important. They both let themselves be carried away by the element, experiencing almost sacred *fascinans*. Walser’s narrator is carried away by the totality and charm of snow with childlike trust and enthusiasm. By bringing to life an ephemeral protagonist who bravely tries to resist the overwhelming power of nature, and killing him off almost simultaneously, he may be expressing the need to surrender to the all-encompassing vagueness. Haupt’s narrator is also under the influence of rain which unceremoniously blurs what is left of contours of events, but ultimately escapes the reality that is completely taken over by rain. Walser’s narrator will see the positive effects of snow which provides the world with beautiful, good, solemn universality (§ 261), and the protagonist of *Deszcz* observes that “peculiar freshness” is among key characteristics of rain (D 277).

Experiencing poetic vagueness may lead to experiencing the emptiness of things, which is related to freeing consciousness and its readiness to achieve perfect openness<sup>56</sup>. This in turn is able to provoke spiritual states resembling the Buddhist cognition of “the world of dust”,

<sup>53</sup>Jullien, 71.

<sup>54</sup>Jullien, 108.

<sup>55</sup>Jullien, 119–120.

<sup>56</sup>Jullien, 81.

which often results in a feeling of detachment, going beyond the world of sensual objects and our attachment to them<sup>57</sup>. This gesture, or rather a certain kind of moving consciousness, is known as the *au-delà* turn – this “beyond”, called for by the vagueness of Chinese aesthetics, is not metaphysical; there is no other world, but our world is simultaneously deprived of its opacity, freed from its realism, it regains its original freshness<sup>58</sup>. Walser’s narrator seems to be more inclined to endure in the (vague) winter landscape, whereas Haupt’s is afraid, and thus tries to escape the world made incredible by its lack of diversity (he never sees that place again, D 278). However, they are unable to remain in this experience<sup>59</sup>, in this *neutrum*, without which – according to Chinese philosophers and artists – taking root in reality is impossible<sup>60</sup>. They also seem to be far from admitting that experiencing vagueness allows them to feel a certain belongingness to the world – the kind which is the foundation of the unity of reality of people and nature for Asian philosophy<sup>61</sup>, something that Western philosophers can only dream about<sup>62</sup>. Out of all states and moods which accompany the psyche while entering vagueness (according to Jullien: calmness, lack of expression, loneliness, abandonment<sup>63</sup>), the narrator of *Snowstorm* experiences calmness; Haupt’s protagonist is clearly moved, he has many questions, and ultimately he leaves the vague territory never to return. However, also in the case of Walser it is difficult to admit that experiencing vagueness may constitute the key, breakthrough point which will mark the beginning of a truly meditative journey to the rule of reality: the never-ending circle of creating the world from its original vagueness: the protagonist heroically dies under thick snow, he is lost in oblivion, and although we are reassured by the narrator that he experiences peace and quiet (§ 262), he is dead, which results in worry and despair. There will be no more contemplative existence; the reader will only take the tears of the protagonist’s widow, who predicted her husband’s fate, beyond the frame of extinguished words.

<sup>57</sup>Jullien, 89.

<sup>58</sup>Jullien, 93.

<sup>59</sup>However, vagueness means a certain intermediate, transition state, which does not last (Jullien, 72–73).

<sup>60</sup>Jullien, 30.

<sup>61</sup>Jullien concludes briefly that *dan* takes place without differentiating between subject and object (Jullien, 25).

<sup>62</sup>As we know, Martin Heidegger criticized Eastern European metaphysics; for him it consolidates the subject-object relation (and representational thinking). In his concept, “What is, in its entirety, is now taken in such a way that it first is in being and only is in being to the extent that it is set up by man, who represents and sets forth” (Martin Heidegger, “The Age of the World View”, translated into Polish by Krzysztof Wolicki, in Wolicki: *Budować, mieszkać, myśleć. Eseje wybrane* [Build, live, think. Selected essays], Krzysztof Michalski [Warszawa: Czytelnik, 1977], 142). English: translated by Marjorie Grene, boundary 2, Winter, 1976, Vol. 4, No. 2, Martin Heidegger and Literature (Winter, 1976), pp. 340–355. Heidegger’s existential analytics protests against perceiving reality as a *world view*, in which man is not an isolated *subiectum*, he does not remain outside of the world; being in the world is the basis for constituting self, and as a result any entity within the world is already discovered and open to being encountered (Janusz Mizera, “Przewyciężenie relacji podmiotowo-przedmiotowej w myśleniu Martina Heideggera” [Overcoming the subject-object relation in Martin Heidegger’s philosophy], *Logos i Ethos* 1 [1993]: 88). Nonetheless, no philosophical treaty will not rule that each and every man is always already in the world, as Heidegger would argue (see e.g. Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, translated into Polish by Bogdan Baran [Warszawa: PWN, 1994], 194–195), and Heidegger’s new language of metaphysics (Sygetics) certainly proves one thing: we (i.e. people of the West) do not know a language in which man would be able to encounter oneself inside the world.

<sup>63</sup>See Jullien, 109.

Julien characterizes the difference between Western and Eastern modus of human existence. In the West reality is tasted – *vide* Lévinas and his polemics with Heidegger<sup>64</sup>. In the East, vagueness is felt, it is the foundation of man's attitude to the world:

Flavor binds us, whereas vagueness – detaches. Flavor dominates, clouds the mind, leads to addiction, and vagueness sets us free from external pressure, sensual excitement, everything that is intensive, and as such – unreal and short-lasting. It frees us from evanescent elations, it quiets internal noise. And then what is deepest inside us is able to capture the rediscovered vagueness of the world, it finds peace in it, and this is the direction in which it begins to develop<sup>65</sup>.

Perhaps – having experienced vagueness – the Western man gets a headache, unable to accept the knowledge of deceptiveness of his own existence; not having a language that could continue the experience of *neutrum*, he stops at the doorstep of the spiritual territory populated by Eastern philosophers. However, this does not belittle the fact that the element presented in Haupt's and Walser's miniatures allows – if for a moment – to cut the ties of the monolith "I", which is worried about certainty, clarity, and unity of knowledge of its own and the world's existence – to break them and be free to think differently!

I hope that these observations regarding the coincidence between Walser's *Snowstorm* and Haupt's *Deszcz* will be developed in future studies that may take us even further.

translated by Paulina Zagórska

<sup>64</sup>See e.g. Marcin Rebes, *Heidegger – Lévinas. Spór o transcendencję prawdy* [Dispute over the transcendence of truth] (Kraków: Universitas, 2005), 103–109.

<sup>65</sup>Jullien, 25–26.

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# KEYWORDS

## COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

*Zygmunt Haupt*

**Robert Walser**

**ABSTRACT:**

The paper analyzes two short stories: *Deszcz* by Zygmunt Haupt and *Little landscape with snow* by Robert Walser, which seem marginal in terms of their works. The two stories share the anti-essentialist vision of the world. The aim of the comparative analysis is to identify similarities in creating reality, as well as situating the two works in the philosophical context (vagueness and entropy), especially by François Jullien.



*entropy*

*silence*

VAGUENESS

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# A watchmaker-dynamitard: From the *Gałąź zachodnia* [The Western Branch] archive\*

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\*This essay has been faithfully copied from the only copy of the computer printout of *Gałąź zachodnia* [The Western branch] (Warsaw 1990, pp. 190–199), that is a volume of my essays on emigration literature, preserved in my home archive. It was to be published as the eleventh volume in a series published by Res Publica Publishing House. The publishing house went bankrupt after publishing ten books. My essay about Haupt was not, if I remember correctly, published elsewhere, and in any case other Haupt scholars have not read it. Some of the questions raised in this essay were later developed in criticism; I refer only to a few selected most important publications, which I do not quote, however, in order to preserve the authenticity of this archival text.

At the very beginning two things need explanation. I became interested in Haupt thanks to Konstanty Jeleński who, in a letter to Roman Zimand, called him “the master of émigré prose.”<sup>1</sup> I was also inspired by Józef Czapski who in the essay “O Haupcie” [About Haupt] described the shock he experienced while reading Haupt’s prose; it was a shock to the system – a kind of feeling which makes us human.<sup>2</sup> This essay discusses only the stories collected in *Pierścień z papieru* [The Paper Ring] (1963), because I used to read Haupt’s short stories in bed when I was ill. Therefore, I do not know the later works published in “Kultura” [Culture] and I am not familiar with critical essays and translations, apart from Arthur Koestler’s essay

<sup>1</sup> Roman Zimand, “Zagajenie” [Introduction], in: *Literatura, źle obecna (rekonesans)* [Literature, Poorly Present (A Reconnaissance)] (London: Polonia, 1984), 7. A longer fragment of this letter by Jeleński is quoted by Krzysztof Rutkowski, “W stronę Haupta” [Towards Haupt], *Teksty Drugie* 1–2 (1991): 115.

<sup>2</sup> Józef Czapski, “O Haupcie” [About Haupt], in: *Czytając* [Reading], ed. Jan Zieliński (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Znak, 1990), 403–413.

about the intelligentsia (1944!) which I read in “Nowa Polska” [New Poland].<sup>3</sup> However, I decided to characterize Haupt’s writing on the basis of one book because illness is conducive to reading Zygmunt Haupt. When you cannot force your brain to read long difficult texts, when you have to swallow this dense poetic prose piece by piece, in small doses, your imagination runs free, you can savor and admire individual passages and words. And then you can try to reflect on and to sum up these impressions.

First impression: the visual and musical qualities of his prose. Visible even in the titles: “Pejzaż ze wschodem słońca i obiektami ze stali” [Landscape with sunrise and steel objects], “Madrygał dla Anusi” [Madrigal for Anusia]. And also in allusions: “rowlandsonowskie wnętrze” [Rowlandson’s interior];<sup>4</sup> “Bona szczyrzy swą trupa głowę i jej suknią ze sztywnej lamy leży bardzo po velásquezowsku (wydział miejski próbuje zalesić jej stoki sosną – nie wychodzi to bardzo, ale dodaje lamie sukni bardzo szlachetnego deseni)” [Bona shows her skull-like head and her stiff lamé dress is draped in a very Velazquezian fashion (the city officials try to forest its slopes with pine – it doesn’t work but it adds a sophisticated touch to the lamé dress)] (BD 329) (this passage refers of course to Bona Sforza’s Mountain in Kremenets); “veronese’owskie ciała” [Veronese bodies] (BD 433), etc. The descriptions are visual and vivid, and the rhythm is musical. Not just individual passages, entire stories have their own distinct rhythm. They are filled with melody. Sometimes the rhythm is fast, pulsating, intricate and filled with little details, and sometimes it is slow, recurring, chiseled. I would love to hear a musicologist’s opinion on “Madrygał dla Anusi” or “Meine liebe Mutter, sei stolz, ich trage die Fahne.”

My second impression: the duality of the narrative. Let us take a look at the story “Co nowego w kinie?” [What’s new at the movies?] (original title: “Elektra”). At first glance, it is an extended memory of the narrator’s cousin, Elektra (which brings to mind mythical connotations). Seemingly, it is a description of one hot day in the Polish borderlands before WW2. But desire, mixed with a premonition of death, is palpable. Death, especially death, is shown in a diverse cultural landscape. Eroticism and death are interconnected, intertwined.

“Siedzieliśmy pod baldachimem zielonych liści, czytałem Carlyle’a *Bohaterów*, ale właściwie: nie czytałem tylko znad kartek książki rzucałem szybkie spojrzenia na jej piersi” [We were sitting under a canopy of green leaves, reading Carlyle’s *On Heroes*, but actually I wasn’t just reading, I was glancing at her breasts] (BD 203). Then the two young people talk, and he makes a mark with his key on the suede hem of his trousers. The conversation is about death (influenced by the death of the dog, shot by the narrator’s father) and eroticism. “Śmierć, to straszne jest – śmierć...” [Death, it’s terrible – death...] “Czy wiesz, jak życie jest przypadkowe?” [Do you know how random life is?] (BD 205). Spermatozoans. The ceremony of veiling – “death in life.” Girls conversing in the convent boarding school “z zasady o chłopcach. Aż mi czasem wstyd...” [mostly about boys. I feel ashamed sometimes...] (BD 206). And then Elektra, as if returning to an earlier, frightening conversation about “tsantsas,” specially-prepared

<sup>3</sup> Arthur Koestler, “Inteligencja” [The Intelligentsia], trans. Zygmunt Haupt, *Nowa Polska*, vol. 1 (1944), 753–762.

<sup>4</sup> All quotations from *Pierścień z papieru* [The Paper Ring] have been verified and standardized by the editors according to: Zygmunt Haupt, *Baskijski diabeł* [The Basque Devil], ed. Aleksander Madyda (Wołowiec: Wydawnictwo Czarne, 2016), here: 213. All quotations from this edition are marked with the abbreviation BD.

human heads, asks the boy to tell her something else about Indians. And the boy talks about Eisenstein's film about Mexico – about Mexicans who perceive and experience death joyfully, even euphorically. And at the same time, a cat appears on the path – it grows to the size of a leopard in the hot air:

Strzeż się lamparta plamistego! To symbol wyuzdania, trucizny pożądania. Patrz! w jego ruchach cynicznych jest tyle lubieżności, patrz! w miękkim, drapieżnym położeniu łapy, w gotowości przy-czajonej do skoku, w migocie sierści, gdy skóra pokrywa grę mięśni, jest skok nagły i koci. Czy w tym plamistym lamparcie, symbolu złego pożądania, czy we mnie samym? We mnie samym drzemał ten symbol w zdradzieckim węźle gordyjskim i oto powstał, i przeży łądzwie, i gotuje się do skoku [Beware of the spotted leopard! It is a symbol of licentiousness, of poisonous lust. Look! there is so much lewdness in its cynical movements, look! in the soft, rapacious placement of the paw, ready to pounce, in the shimmer of the fur covering the moving muscles, there is a sudden feline leap. Is it in that spotted leopard, the symbol of devilish desire, or in myself? Within myself, this symbol lied hidden in the treacherous Gordian knot, and now it has arisen, flexing its loins, and preparing to leap] (BD 207).

As if identifying with the animal, the narrator draws leopard spots on his suede trousers with a key. “Jak łatwo je było zetrzeć jednym przetarciem dłoni...” [How easy it was to wipe them off with one swipe of my hand] (BD 207).

This combination of “exotic” death stories with the presence of a symbolic leopard causes Elektra to faint. The doctor mentions “women’s issues” but he also suggests visiting a pulmonologist. However, before the doctor arrived, the wet shirt which tightly wrapped the body of the unconscious girl made the narrator think about Greek sculptors (they draped their models in wet robes). He utters a sentence that connects both aspects of the story: “Elektra w omdleniu, jak grecki posąg, z mokrymi fałdami zbiegającymi się u jej stóp i jej różowe piersi prześwieślały się przez muślin jak marmur i okrągły brzuch, i uda, i w rozrzuceniu złotych włosów była jak grecki posąg z chryzelefantyny” [Elektra, unconscious, like a Greek statue, and the folds of the wet robe come together at her feet, and her pink breasts shine through the muslin like marble, and her round belly and her thighs, and framed by her golden hair she was like a Greek chryselephantine statue] (BD 209).

This brief analysis of the story, which pays attention only to its most important aspects, shows the artistry with which different motifs intertwine but it barely hints at the understatements and gaps pregnant with psychophysiological microevents. Those vibrations and traces may be easily wiped off with your hand.<sup>5</sup>

“Co nowego w kinie?” could be classified as an autobiographical story.<sup>6</sup> Autobiographical traits

<sup>5</sup> Andrzej Niewiadomski writes in detail about Haupt's technique and aesthetics, “*Jeden jest zawsze ostrzem*”. *Inna nowoczesność Zygmunta Haupta* [“One is always the blade.” Zygmunta Haupt's other modernity] (Lublin: Wydawnictwo UMCS, 2015).

<sup>6</sup> On autobiographical issues in Haupt's prose cf.: Aleksander Madyda, *Haupt. Monografia* [Haupt. Monograph] (Toruń: Wydawnictwo UMK, 2012) and Paweł Panas, *Zagubiony wśród obcych. Zygmunta Haupt – pisarz, wygnaniec, outsider* [Lost among strangers. Zygmunta Haupt – writer, exile, outsider] (Bielsko-Biała – Kraków: Wydawnictwo Naukowe ATH, Instytut Literatury, 2019).

are prominent in the text, starting with the first visual invocation: “To już wiele lat, kiedy ona była. Już tyle uleciało mi z pamięci i w rozpaczy, i gorączkowo ścigam przeszłość, żeby ją wydobyć z tego zapomnienia. Gdzieżeś to Elektro! Elektro, och Elektro!” [It’s been many years since she was. I have forgotten so much and I am feverishly and desperately chasing the past to save her from oblivion. Where art thou, Elektra! Elektra, my Elektra!] (BD 197). And probably this story was based on an event from the author’s youth. We cannot verify this claim today. However, we can analyze the superstructure of the story – investigate to what extent this story has been “constructed.” I suspect that the name Elektra is not real. Unusual names, especially those inspired by Greek mythology, had been in vogue in the Polish Borderlands since the Enlightenment. However, in the story, it all seems to work together all too well. Isn’t it a transposition from Eugene O’Neill’s trilogy *Mourning Becomes Electra* (1929–1931) or possibly from Jean Giraudoux’s play *Electra* (1937)? Just like the poem written by the narrator entitled *0,005 cyjankali* [0.005 of potassium cyanide] refers to Friedrich Wolf’s famous play *Cyankali* (1929). At the same time, from 1931 to 1932, Sergei Eisenstein was making his movie about Mexico. But the narrator could not have seen it in Poland before WW2 – four films were made from the footage shot in Mexico after the director’s death (1948). By the way, I do not recall any references to Eisenstein in “Elektra” in “Nowa Polska” (1944).<sup>7</sup> I’ll have to check it to be sure.

(Later addition: And yet he could have seen it! I checked in “Nowa Polska” and it is there. A detailed description of the entire scene from the movie, undoubtedly because he saw it with his own eyes and not because someone described it to him. So, who made a mistake? *Wielka Encyklopedia Powszechna PWN* [Polish PWN Encyclopedia] states that Sol Lesser made three films from the material shot by Eisenstein for *¡Qué viva México!: Thunder over Mexico* (1933), *Eisenstein in Mexico* (1933) and *Death Day* (1934). In 1939, Maria Seton and Roger Burnford made *Time in the Sun*, and a Chicago studio [Bell & Howell] made the five episodes of *Mexican Symphony* in 1941. Most likely, judging from the narrator’s conversation with Elektra, Haupt saw Lesser’s third and final movie, *Death Day*).<sup>8</sup>

I do not intend to undermine the credibility of Haupt’s story: it is not a dry, official autobiography but a work of art. The author does not have to stay true to the facts, even though the narrator accepts and emphasizes the autobiographical perspective. I only wished to verify the facts (and maybe someone else will find them useful) to move beyond autobiography, to relativize the stories that were so carefully arranged in a fixed pattern.

And what is this pattern? The short stories collected in *Pierścień z papieru* are like episodes from Zygmunt Haupt’s life. From his childhood in Podolia and Volhynia, through adolescence, adult life (with a separate history of hunting), the experiences of September 1939, military travels (France, Scotland), and finally emigration to the US (Louisiana). The last part, the part that binds the land of Haupt’s childhood, the land of his most important experiences,

<sup>7</sup> Zygmunt Haupt, “Elektra”, *Nowa Polska*, 8 (1944): 524–531.

<sup>8</sup> On Haupt’s fascination with cinema, see: Rafał Szczerbakiewicz, “Haupt idzie do kina” [Haupt at the movies], in: “*Jestem bardzo niefortunnym wyborem*”. *Studia i szkice o twórczości Zygmunta Haupta* [“I am a very unfortunate choice.” Studies and sketches about Zygmunt Haupt’s works], ed. Andrzej Niewiadomski, Paweł Panas (Lublin: Wydawnictwo UMCS, 2018).

together is *nostoi* – coming back to the land of his childhood, coming back to Ulashkivtsi on the Seret River (where the narrator was born), coming back to the lands which at the time (before WW1) lain at the edge of Eastern Galicia and which during the war were seized by the Russians (“Ale tamten kraj pozostał tamtym krajem, a tutaj to było tutaj” [But that country remained that country, and here was here], BD 427).

The most important element of this childhood landscape is the steppe. The lowlands of Volhynia and the uplands of Podolia open the door to the depths, to the past (“historical landscape,” this concept was so close to the painter Konstantin Bogaevsky) and to the distant, to the exotic that every young reader of adventure books loves. In the story “O Stefci, o Chaimie Immerglücku i o scytyjskich bransoletkach” [About Stefcia, Chaim Immerglück and Scythian Bracelets], Stefcia, a drowned girl whom the narrator loved, turns into a sublime and mysterious Scythian princess buried in a barrow on a hill. “Czy zapomnieć mi o królownie scytyjskiej, czy zagłuszyć jej wspomnienie w zgiełku wielkiej i pustej ptaszarni, *aviarium*, jakim jest moja niespokojna świadomość?...” [Should I forget about the Scythian princess or silence the memory of her in the hustle and bustle of a large and empty aviary, an *aviarium*, that is my restless consciousness?...] (BD 237). Aleksander Wat made similar attempts to reconstruct a mythical genealogy and connect with his royal ancestors in his late poems (“Czemu mówiono, że umarła?...” [Why did they say she was dead?], “Hymn z Ciemnego świedidla” [A Hymn, from the Lumen Obscurum volume], 1968).

Certain passages from “Fragmenty” [Fragments], especially from the “homecoming” part, seem to echo a similar sentiment: “Mówię sobie: wysił się, przypomnij sobie. I przypominam sobie, ale oderwane fragmenciki, jakbym przebierał w palcach paru ocalonymi kosteczkami mozaiki znalezionymi na miejscu dawnego rzymskiego domu, i z tego nie uda mi się odbudować obrazu” [I say to myself: make an effort, remember. And I remember, but only little fragments, as if I were playing with a few pieces of a mosaic found at the site of an ancient Roman villa, and this is not enough to reconstruct the whole] (BD 427). Remains of a Roman villa somewhere on the Seret? No, the narrator borrowed this image from a different experience, from a military camp in Lapalud on the Rhône in the last days before the fall of France (the story “Barbarzyńcy patrzą w krajobraz podbitego kraju” [Barbarians look at the landscape of the conquered country]). The landscape, as is often the case in Haupt’s stories, is both seen and remembered: “a dalej wzgórza. W stronę Awinionu przybiegają do szosy i sterczą na nich ruiny zamków i warowni, jak u nas na Podolu, regularnie wzdłuż linii, jak u nas Trembowla, Czortków, Jagielnica, Skała” [and then the hills. In the direction of Avignon, they extend towards the road and there are ruins of castles and strongholds sticking out of them arranged neatly, in a line, like in Podolia, like in our Terebovlia, Chortkiv, Yahilnytsia, Skała-Podilska] (BD 375). In such a landscape, the narrator finds the ruins of a Roman villa. He takes a few pebbles as a souvenir and, among other things, reflects on this:

Więc jak to? Naprzód było coś skałą, gnejsem, piaskowcem, alabastrem, masą nieprzeliczoną i tępą natury, calizną, blokiem, i odłupane cierpliwie, i obrobione skrzętnie, i zlepione, i ułożone, przesiane przez mózg ludzki jak przez sito, dobrane, wyspekulowane, wygładzone i wyszlifowane, kiedy zbiegło się w obraz, kiedy pobłogosławione i wyświęcone do zaszczytu, do wzruszenia sztuki, dzieła sztuki, to po to tylko, ażeby przyszedł czas i rozdmuchał to znowu w chaos, w mnogość,

czyli w nicość? [How could it be? First, something was a rock, gneiss, sandstone, alabaster, a dense natural mass, a whole, a block, and then it was patiently chipped off, and painstakingly processed, and glued together, and arranged, sifted through the human brain as through a sieve, selected, designed, smoothed and polished so that it became an image, it was blessed and consecrated to become art, to move, to move as a work of art, only for the time to come and break it again into chaos, into a million pieces, that is, into nothingness?] (BD 385).

This long quotation demonstrates the structural continuity between the borderlands of Haupt's childhood and the Mediterranean culture, which was an important point of reference for Haupt (and for Stanisław Vincenz and for Jerzy Stempowski). I will also refer to this point later – I shall discuss the inherent dialectics of order and chaos, of construction and destruction, found in this image.

The steppe, as has been said, was also important for young Haupt. Haupt's borderland stories are covered with a whole network of references to adventure novels, written primarily for young people, to books about pirates, Indians, Captain James Cook, Nantucket whalers, Royal Canadian Horse Artillery, and social outcasts.

Już wtedy zaczytywałem się w literaturze, opisach, relacjach i peregrynacjach, które obejmuje się jednym słowem: 'egzotyka'. Ta egzotyka, dziś z autopsji tak nijaka i nie zaskakująca, odkrywana wśród przewracanych kart książek, owe 'llanosy' i 'pampasy', 'veldt' południowo-afrykański, 'bush' australijski, prairie, tundry, sawanny zaczynały się u horyzontu naszego podolskiego stepu [Even then, I was in love with literature, descriptions, accounts and peregrinations, which can be described with one word: 'exotic.' Today, having experienced it first-hand, the exotic seems so bland and boring, discovered on the pages of books, those 'llanos' and 'pampas,' South African 'veldt,' Australian 'bush,' prairies, tundra, savannahs extended just beyond the horizon of our Podolian steppe] (BD 420).

This last sentence, as it sometimes is the case in Haupt's prose, is not grammatically correct. But maybe that is the way it is supposed to be. The jump from the Podolian steppe to the exotic steppes could be somewhat problematic...

The youthful love of adventure books comes hand in hand with erudition. Interestingly, it is both filled with doubt and vast in scope. Haupt's erudition is exuberant – he quotes from memory, and he does not double-check his quotations. Uncertainty gives rise to questioning: "gdzie to? Czy nie u Homera?" [who wrote about it? Homer?] (BD 417) or "jak to gdzie? jak to grają w «pelotę» o mury kościołów w kraju Basków?" [what do you mean where? they play "pelota" against the walls of churches in the Basque country?] (BD 420). This erudite uncertainty is, of course, a stylistic device often found in *gawęda* [literally "a tale;" a genre of Polish folk literature]. It reduces the distance between the author and the reader. It also shows what this kind of narrative is all about: learned interpolations are not as important as the act of remembering, with all its nuances and subtexts, with all its uncertainties and gaps.

Let us also consider the scope of Haupt's erudition. English and French references are the most prominent. This should not come as a surprise – Haupt hailed from a borderland intel-





Much more interesting than overt erudition is hidden erudition; it tells us more about the author. In the case of Haupt, two literary traditions come into play, and referring to them, in various periods and in various circles, was not always appreciated in Poland. I do not think that Haupt consciously explored this sentiment; the number of direct hints and references to Russian and German literature is disproportionately small compared to Haupt's actual knowledge of them. Anton Chekhov is mentioned three times. Surprisingly, two references (repeated in two different stories) may be found in the description of a terrible life in the countryside – “niedużej komuny, na niedużym terenie” [a small commune, on a small area] (BD 281) and “niewielkiej komuny, na niedużym terenie” [a little commune, on a small area] (BD 309). This repetition, with minor stylistic variations, as if it were a text translated twice by different translators, may be interpreted in Freudian terms. Alas, it is all very complicated: Haupt does not refer to Chekhov but to Ivan Turgenev (Haupt's “hunting” cycle owes a lot to Turgenev – I'm talking about the atmosphere, the structure of the narrative, and some formal solutions; it was not plagiarism!).

The most interesting example of hidden erudition, however, may be found in a short story the title of which I will disclose later. The story is actually a recollection of a conversation with a friend in a house in Szymbark, which ends thus:

Zanim pożegnam Szymbark [...] zrobię szybko rachunek sumienia, cofnę się w siebie. Cała sprawa jest tak prosta i nieskomplikowana, [że] we wspomnieniu będzie wyglądać jak sznurek ideogramów, jak deseń. Że były raz trzy siostry (a może cztery?), że dom, drzewa, garby i plecy wzgórz, że spokój i wzruszenia ludzi żyjących osobno [...]. Można zapomnieć wszystko, zachować tylko jeden szczegół, próbkę do sprawdzenia, szyfr katalogowy, kontramarkę, którą wystarczy pokazać w kontramarkarni ażeby wydany mi został cały bagaż, skład pozostawiony w niepamięci [Before I say goodbye to Szymbark [...] I will quickly examine my conscience, I will withdraw into myself. The whole thing is so simple and uncomplicated [that] in my memory it looks like a series of ideographs, like a pattern. There were once three sisters (or maybe four?), a house, trees, rolling hills, the peace and emotions of people living apart [...]. You can forget everything, remember only one detail, a sample to be checked, a catalog code, a cloakroom ticket which you show in the cloakroom and everything you forgot, your forgotten luggage, is handed back to you] (BD 261).

The “cloakroom ticket” that brings memories back is the sixteen-year-old son of the owners of the house. He is buried in a grave in a World War One cemetery in the nearby Gorlice: “Było tam że D.O.M. czy «*Ci gît*», że spoczywa w pokoju Fähnrich taki i taki, było arystokratyczne nazwisko z «von und zu» i że miał lat siedemnaście” [it read D.O.M. or «*Ci gît*», that Fähnrich so-and-so rests in peace, there was an aristocratic name with “von und zu” and it was mentioned that he was seventeen] (BD 261).

The next paragraph is a meditation on just how much can “fit” into seventeen years of life. The narrator asks a series of questions and ends his meditation with the following summary: “Tyle tylko czasu było, ażeby zawołać, naznaczyć słowem, ażeby odróżnić tym słowem od innych, przywiązać do tego słowa odległe znaczenie, dać mu to słowo w dłoń, jak lancę z proporcem, i nazwać go chorążym, wywołać go z chaosu i czasu” [There was only so much time to call out, to mark him with a word and thus distinguish him from others, to attach a distant

meaning to this word, to give it to him like a lance with a pennant, and to call him a standard-bearer, to call him out of chaos and time] (BD 262). The final paragraph of the story explains why the narrator was so moved by the grave and why he repeatedly returned to the tomb of “someone else’s child:” “Wydało mi się, że tym kamieniem została na zawsze i niepowrotnie przykryta moja młodość” [It seemed to me that my youth was forever buried under this tombstone] (BD 262).

It is now time to reveal the title of the story: “Meine liebe Mutter, sei stoltz, ich trage die Fahne.” This is a slightly distorted quote (Haupt quoted from memory) from Rainer Maria Rilke’s “The Song of Love and Death of Cornet Christoph Rilke.” If one does not recognize the quote, the elaborate paraphrase will be pointless. Indeed, Haupt made it difficult for the reader to identify the original. The word “cornet” is not used – he uses instead the word “standard-bearer” (in the meditation) and the word “Fähnrich” (it may be found on the tombstone). And yet this word is crucial in the narrator’s reflection. Rilke’s original reads: “Da sagt Spork, der grosse General: «Cornet». Und da ist viel” [And then the great general speaks: “You’ll carry the flag, Cornet.” That’s all. But a lot].<sup>10</sup> The final confession echoes the observation about childhood, which, along with the robe, falls down the cornet’s shoulders. For the sake of completeness, let us add that the story in question, with its rhythmic structure and short broken sentences with numerous repetitions, differs from Haupt’s other stories. It reminds us of the unique rhythm of Rilke’s work.

Hidden or overt erudition and various literary features are not an end in themselves in Haupt’s prose. The aim of this writing is to find oneself, one’s place in the world. This type of self-knowledge, so important for the author, can also help others. With other people in mind, I would like to perform one more procedure: focus on and analyze a certain duality.

Let us return to the Roman mosaic, first carefully arranged, and then mercilessly destroyed by time and wars. In the story “Z kroniki o latającym domu” [From the Chronicles of the Flying House], the narrator finds (probably in Louisiana) a seaside house badly damaged by a hurricane. He then ponders for a moment whether it is possible to save the building, for all the right reasons (“naprawić zło, oddalić zło, pokonać idące z nim opuszczenie i bezdomność” [to repair the evil, to remove the evil, to overcome the abandonment and homelessness that comes with it] (BD 421)). However, he soon abandons this plan, replacing it with another: he wants to demolish the house. He is overcome by genuine passion, a destructive frenzy:

Ażeby i śladu nie zostało, rozwłóczyć te bele, krokwie, płatwie, zemleć tynk na nowo w piasek i posiać go na wszystkie cztery strony świata, strzępy firanek podrzeć z pasją na wstążki, szkło zakopać w ziemię, pooblupowaną wannę potrząsać w skorupy, rury powyginać w nic nie mówiący kształt, a miejsce zaorać, zryć, wygrabić, zrównać, ażeby zarosło palczastymi liśćmi „palmetto”, bambusu i dzikiego banana [So that not even a trace remains, drag away these logs, rafters, purlins, grind the plaster into sand and scatter it around the world, passionately tear shreds of curtains into ribbons, bury glass in the ground, crack a chipped bathtub into shells, mold pipes into a mean-

<sup>10</sup>Rainer Maria Rilke, *Werke*. Band III: 1 *Prosa* (Frankfurt am Main: Insel Verlag, 1980), 98. Translated into English by Harry Guest (<https://fortnightlyreview.co.uk/2017/01/lay-love-death-christoph-cornet-rilke-von-langenau/>).

ingless shape, and the place should be plowed, plowed up, ragged, levelled, so that it is overgrown with palmetto leaves, bamboo and wild banana] (BD 421).

The story ends with this scene of “exultation and despair.” A good deed (building) quickly gives way to passion (destruction). The narrator probably wants revenge for the fact that his family home, evoked in the middle of the story, was destroyed. Or maybe there is more to that? Maybe this is how Haupt experiences the world?

In “Jeździec bez głowy” [The Headless Horseman], the narrator speaks of “swej skłóconej, protestującej myśli” [his contradictory, protesting mind] (BD 348); in “Dziwnie bardzo było, bo...” [Strange it was, because...] a friend calls him a lazy representative of the lumpenproletariat – he “nie pasuje do życia społecznego” [does not belong in society] (BD 334); in “Barbarzyńcy patrzą w krajobraz podbitego kraju,” the safe and secure life of a bourgeois couple whom the narrator meets in the papal palace in Avignon is contrasted with his own: “wolę, żeby tam nie wiem co, swoją zgraję, swój nieporządek, wałęsaninę i włóczęgostwo, i niepokój” [I prefer no matter what, my bunch, my disorder, rambling and vagabondage, and anxiety] (BD 381); in “Fragmenty” he confesses: “Niechbym nie wiem jak przylegał do innych, kupić się i wpierał w stado, nic mi to nie pomoże i zawsze zostanę sam, będę patrzył wzdłuż swego nosa” [I may try to bond, I may try to buy my way in and support the group, but it will not help me and I will always be alone, I will always care for myself] (BD 430). This last confession, along with a rebellious spirit, suggests a different path. This duality will resound clearly in the conclusion of “Fragmenty:” “Będę się buntować stada i będę mu się oddawać, cisnąć się pośród jego ciżby” [I will rebel against the herd, and I will give myself to it, I will live among the people] (BD 440). Earlier, we read: “Jestem stronniczym historykiem, Plutarchem własnego autoramentu, kronikarzem i syntetyzującym panegirystą samego siebie. Dlaczego tak się dzieje? Pewnie ażeby zachować siebie w kupie, nie zanarchizować się samemu i nie zatracić na rozmieszane ziarno i roztarty piasek prawdy” [I am a biased historian, a Plutarch of my own making, a chronicler and synthesizing panegyrist of myself. Why? Probably in order to keep myself together, so that I do not become an anarchist and I do not lose myself in the grain and the fine sand of truth] (BD 430).

These undoubtedly autobiographical and self-referential confessions reveal the essence of Haupt’s work and personality. The desire for rebellion, independence, protest, and the fear of “anarchization,” of losing oneself and losing one’s integrity. When I think of Haupt in this way, I cannot help but compare him with Andrzej Bobkowski. While they differed in many respects – Haupt was, as Jeleński put it, “a master” who created sophisticated and carefully constructed stories which were sometimes based on several levels of omissions and Bobkowski wrote “on the surface,” clearly stating his reasons and emotions – their lives and beliefs were similar. Guatemala and Louisiana are in the same climate zone, the same geographical region – by the Caribbean Sea and the Gulf of Mexico. It was there that the desire for adventure and the exotic, and for freedom, were to be fulfilled. Perhaps both writers moved there because they had read about such exotic places in adventure novels as children. Such dreams are usually abandoned in adulthood. They die of natural causes, or unfavorable circumstances get the best of them. You need willpower, initiative, maybe even childish stubbornness to believe in such dreams – which all boys share – and to make them reality.

In an essay about Bobkowski (“Querido Bob”), Józef Czapski asked:

Who will trace his mental development from the noble Polish anarchist [...] to the end, when he was much more mature? Who will reflect on this fight against “rotten ideologies,” the fight for “a man of flesh and blood,” a complete man whose freedom is not a slogan, nor does it hide his anger.<sup>11</sup>

Czapski’s questions are still relevant. We can thus also ask about Haupt’s anarchic tendencies. After all, if you have this to say about the Polish eagle, you are an anarchist: “nie było już nawet mieszczańskiego entuzjazmu dla posrebrzonego ptaszka siedzącego na barokowym kartuszu czy, jak inni chcą, na klasycznym obuchu rzymskiego topora” [even bourgeois enthusiasm for the silver-plated bird at a Baroque cartouche or, as others say, at the classic head of a Roman ax, faded] (“W Paryżu i w arkadii”, BD 219). The author even cites historical antecedents for those who would like to examine anarchism hidden in his works, or, in other words, to examine his attitude towards the world. In “Biały mazur” [White Mazurka], he writes about craftsmen “co własnymi rękami urabiają odpowiedzialnie jedną harmonijną całość” [who responsibly form one harmonious whole with their own hands]. Those men are “najbardziej skłonni są potem do anarchii, stąd ten anarchiczny szewski poniedziałek, który upił się po niedzieli jak szewc, dlatego najzręczniejszymi dynamitardami i ciskaczami bomb, pocziwych staroświeckich bomb zeszłego stulecia, jak to się mówi, to byli właśnie zegarmistrze” [most inclined to anarchy, hence the anarchic shoemaker Monday that got blind drunk on Sunday; that is why watchmakers were the most skillful dynamitards and bomb throwers; they threw the good old-fashioned bombs of the previous century] (BD 292–293).

Zygmunt Haupt was such a writer. He combined precise descriptions, sophisticated language, and carefully reconstructed memories with creative freedom, unpredictability, and imagination. He was a watchmaker/dynamitard.

translated by Małgorzata Olsza

<sup>11</sup>Józef Czapski, “Querido Bob”, in: *Czytając* [Reading] (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Znak, 1990), 394.

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# KEYWORDS

anarchism in literature

**Andrzej Bobkowski**

*cinematic techniques*

**ABSTRACT:**

An unpublished essay about Haupt found in the critic's archive: it is a chapter from a book titled *Gałąź Zachodnia* [The Western Branch] on Polish émigré literature, ready to print in 1990, but never published. The essay discusses the distinct features of Zygmunt Haupt's prose, such as its artistic and musical qualities, complex narrative structure, (false) autobiographical tropes, hidden erudition, historical landscape, cinematic techniques, borderland and Mediterranean themes, and references to adventure novels. Haupt's prose is also compared with the works of Andrzej Bobkowski, which allows the critic to discuss the contradiction, also emphasized in the title of the essay, between Haupt's anarchist tendencies and his quest for perfection and precision in a work of art.

*Rainer Maria Rilke*

## Mediterranean culture

POLISH BORDERLANDS  
AND BORDERLANDS  
CULTURE

### **NOTE ON THE AUTHOR:**

Jan Zieliński – literary historian and art critic, former lecturer of Polish literature and culture at the University of Fribourg (Switzerland), former professor of literature at the Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw. Author of many books (his most recent publication is *Magiczne Oświecenie* [Magical Enlightenment], Wydawnictwo Naukowe UKSW: Warsaw: 2022) and curator of exhibitions. His column *Chronometr* is regularly published in the annual “Załącznik Kulturoznawczy.” His column *Słownik opypski* is regularly published in the literary quarterly “Wyspa.” His essays from the *Lektury spiralne* series are published in “Pamiętnik Literacki” (London).

# Elementary memory and its limits. Element and detail in Zygmunt Haupt's prose

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Towards combining factography with fiction.  
Some remarks on Haupt studies

There are two clear tendencies in the reception of Zygmunt Haupt's prose. The circle of Parisian "Kultura" [Culture], probably the first to recognize Haupt's talent, focused on the **memorialistic** character of his prose. In 1962 Jerzy Stempowski wrote a letter to Jerzy Giedroyc saying that "Haupt's stories are not products of imagination. They are memories, works of a memorialist"<sup>1</sup>. In the same year, Haupt was awarded the magazine's prize, and Paweł Hostowiec commented that his stories "adhere perfectly to observed reality"<sup>2</sup>. Józef Czapski's attitude within the "Kultura" milieu is harder to classify; on the one hand, he highlighted the emotional, "internal" culture of Haupt's prose, and on the other – he looked at it with a painter's eye, comparing Haupt's visuality to Cézanne's "seeing anew"<sup>3</sup>. Nonetheless,

<sup>1</sup> Jerzy Giedroyc, Jerzy Stempowski, *Listy 1946–1969* [Letters], edited by Andrzej St. Kowalczyk, part II (Warszawa: Czytelnik, 1998), 214–215 (letter from 30.10.1962).

<sup>2</sup> [Paweł Hostowiec], "Nagroda literacka «Kultury» za r. 1962 – Zygmunt Haupt" [«Kultura's» 1962 literary award] 1-2 (1963): 195.

<sup>3</sup> Józef Czapski, "O Haupcie" [On Haupt], *Kultura* 10 (1963). See Agnieszka Bielak, "Haupt Czapskiego" [Czapski's Haupt], in: *Jestem bardzo niefortunnym wyborem*. *Studia i szkice o twórczości Zygmunta Haupta* [I am a very unfortunate choice. Studies and papers on works by Zygmunt Haupt], edited by Andrzej Niewiadomski, Paweł Panas (Lublin: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej, 2018).



Czapski did not argue with the memorialistic classification of Haupt's works, which remained the dominant interpretation in the "Kultura" circle.

A few years later, Krzysztof Rutkowski proposed a **fictionalist** approach to Haupt's prose. Based on the high frequency of the phrase "as if" in Haupt's stories, as well as on a reference to Hans Vaihinger, a neo-Kantian and author of *Die Philosophie des Als Ob* (*The philosophy of "as if"*, 1911)<sup>4</sup>, Rutkowski concluded that Haupt's is highly hypothetical literature, rather than stories about the world "as it is" or "as it was"<sup>5</sup>. Perhaps it is not a coincidence that Haupt's prose, rediscovered in Poland in late 1980s and early 1990s, was not treated as a memory medium for Eastern borderlands; it was then when a revision of the canon of Polish modernism from the perspective of form became just as important as the cultural-historical aspect<sup>6</sup>.

It seems that all subsequent approaches to Haupt's work were variations of those two basic conceptualizations (memorialistic and fictionalist). In an interview by Renata Gorczyńska in 1989 (published ten years later, in 1999), even before Rutkowski's publication, Czesław Miłosz spoke of biographical "impressions" mixed with "half-fictional episodes", as if he wanted to synthesize the possibilities determined by those two opposite reading strategies: "In Haupt fictionality is not that strongly developed. His prose is partially a memoir"<sup>7</sup>. Thus, Miłosz compared it to the egofication of Haupt's contemporary, Henry Miller. At the time, Miłosz's interview passed unnoticed by contemporary Haupt studies – this may be because of Miłosz's initial disdain for Haupt, due to his "literary", bloodless paper association with the title of Haupt's first collection of stories. As a result, Miłosz did not include it in *The History of Polish Literature*, 1969, 1983<sup>8</sup>. It is interesting that unlike in "Kultura", in the case of Miłosz, the (partially) memorialistic interpretation appeared only years later.

Balancing – implicit in Miłosz – became more defined in studies by Aleksander Madyda, who stressed that "writers are after more than just preserving the past"<sup>9</sup>, and who characterized Haupt's prose as "autobiographism", i.e. autobiography with fictional elements<sup>10</sup>. It would not be an exaggeration to say that the most important reconfigurations among scholars of Haupt after 2000 have concerned the issue of artistic forms, i.e. constructing space, fragmentation of time, and tropology (rhetoric, mannerism, etc.), as is evidenced in works by Monika Kłosińska-Duszczak, Ewa Wiegandt, Piotr Rambowicz, Dorota Utracka, Agnieszka

<sup>4</sup> This refers to the story "Henry Bush i jego samolot" [Henry Bush and his plane] (1948). Zygmunt Haupt, *Baskijski diabeł. Opowiadania i reportaże* [Basque devil. Stories and reportages], edited by Aleksander Madyda, introduction by Andrzej Stasiuk (Wołowiec: Wydawnictwo Czarne, 2016), 408. All quotes from *Baskijski diabeł* are from this edition. All translations mine, PZ.

<sup>5</sup> Krzysztof Rutkowski, "W stronę Haupta" [Towards Haupt], *Teksty Drugie* 1-2 (1991): 117.

<sup>6</sup> Jan Zieliński's *Leksykon* [Lexicon], first published in 1989, played a formative role here. See Jan Zieliński, [alias Kowalski], *Leksykon polskiej literatury emigracyjnej* [Lexicon of Polish emigration literature], 2nd edition, revised and extended (Lublin: Wydawnictwo FIS, Wydawnictwo Unipress, 1990), 56–57.

<sup>7</sup> "[C]hez Haupt le caractère fictif n'est pas poussé très loin. Sa prose a pour une part le caractère de mémoires". Czesław Miłosz, Renata Gorczyńska, "En guise de préface" [1989], in: Zygmunt Haupt, *Le chardon roulant*, trad. du polonais par Alain Van Crugten et Elisabeth Destrée-Van Wilder (Montricher: Noir sur Blanc, 1999), 12–13 (translated by me, Ch.Z.).

<sup>8</sup> Miłosz, Gorczyńska, 8.

<sup>9</sup> Aleksander Madyda, "Posłowie" [Afterword], in: Zygmunt Haupt, *Baskijski diabeł*, edited by Aleksander Madyda (Warszawa: Czytelnik, 2007), 682.

<sup>10</sup> Aleksander Madyda, *Haupt. Monografia* [Haupt. Monograph] (Toruń: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Mikołaja Kopernika, 2012), 9–31.

Nęcka, Jagoda Wierzejska, Jakub Lubelski and Andrzej Niewiadomski<sup>11</sup>. In these studies, memory ceased to be directly related to record; they are all concerned with fictional motifs, which, however, were not as central as in Rutkowski's works. The findings of representatives of "Kultura" may remain influential even today – more than one would expect – as Maciej Nowak's recent study highlights. On the one hand, he openly opposes the memorialist thesis: "Haupt's 'remembered' material is used for exploring a whole variety of issues which go far beyond memoir literature"<sup>12</sup>. Haupt was supposed to be mostly concerned with the passing time, and temporality in general – however, this means that despite his intentions, Nowak in fact continues the memorialistic orientation, motivating it "existentially" rather than culturally-historically-regionally.

The present paper is situated between the two trends in reception, highlighting their mutual dependence. I will refer especially to Miłosz's observations, who stressed the importance of details as building blocks in Haupt's prose. Miłosz was impressed with "this totally amazing gift for evoking details" (*ce don d'évocation tout à fait invraisemblable des détails*) or simply "an unparalleled number of details" (*une quantité inouïe de détails*) in those stories<sup>13</sup>, which he connected to the fact that Haupt came from Eastern borderlands. According to Miłosz, Haupt preserved a world characterized by a wonderful surplus of details. And because of the War, the Holocaust, Sovietization, and the relocations that reality was replaced with "enormous greyness" (*une énorme grisaille*), deprived of genuine, vibrant details. Miłosz found the highly technologized American society of the second half of the 20th century no less deprived of details – due to its abstract "attitude" to natural environment. This context offers an interesting ground for comparisons with Haupt, who was an emigrant as well; in terms of landscape impressions of "incurable Europeans" (Miłosz) in America – with another emigrant, Theodor W. Adorno. Miłosz openly admitted that his perspective carried the risk of idealizing the East-

<sup>11</sup>See Monika Kłosińska-Duszczak, "Funkcjonalizacja przestrzeni w prozie Zygmunta Haupta i Czesława Miłosza: Kresy – Ameryka" [The functionalization of space in prose by Zygmunt Haupt and Czesław Miłosz: Eastern borderlands – America], *Przegląd Humanistyczny* 3 (1998); Ewa Wiegandt, "Wszystko-nic Zygmunta Haupta" [Zygmunt Haupt's everything-nothing], in Wiegandt: *Niepokoje literatury. Studia o prozie polskiej XX wieku* [Literature's unrest. Studies in Polish twenty-century prose] (Poznań: Wydawnictwo WBPiCAK, 2010); Piotr Rambowicz, "«Potrafię skazać się na nicłość». Kreacje przestrzeni w prozie Zygmunta Haupta" [«I can sentence myself to nothingness». Creations of space in Zygmunt Haupt's prose], in: *Paryż – Londyn – Monachium – Nowy Jork. Powrześniowa emigracja niepodległościowa na mapie kultury nie tylko polskiej* [Paris – London – Munich – New York. Post-September independence emigration on the cultural map – not only Polish], edited by Violetta Wejs-Milewska, Ewa Rogalewska (Białystok: Oddział Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej, Wydawnictwo Uniwersyteckie Trans Humana, 2009); Dorota Utracka, *Strzaskana mozaika. Studium warsztatu pisarskiego Zygmunta Haupta* [Shattered mosaic. An analysis of Zygmunt Haupt's writing] (Toruń: Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, 2011); Agnieszka Nęcka, "W pogoni za fantazmatem miłości: na marginesie wybranych opowiadań Zygmunta Haupta" [In pursuit of the phantasm of love: marginal notes on several stories by Zygmunt Haupt], *Tematy i Konteksty* 1 (2011); Jagoda Wierzejska, *Retoryczna interpretacja autobiograficzna na przykładzie pisarstwa Andrzeja Bobkowskiego, Zygmunta Haupta i Leo Lipskiego* [Rhetorical autobiographical interpretation on the example of works by Andrzej Bobkowski, Zygmunt Haupt and Leo Lipski] (Warszawa: Dom Wydawniczy Elipsa, 2012), 245–364; Jakub Lubelski, "Zygmunta Haupta porzucanie literackości" [Zygmunt Haupt's abandonment of literariness], in *Lubelski: Ssanie. Głód sacrum w literaturze polskiej* [Sucking. Hunger for sacrum in Polish literature] (Warszawa: Teologia Polityczna, 2015), 182; Andrzej Niewiadomski, "Jeden jest zawsze ostrzem". *Inna nowoczesność Zygmunta Haupta* [One is always a blade. The different modernity of Zygmunt Haupt] (Lublin: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej, 2015); Andrzej Niewiadomski, *Przeciw entropii, przeciw Arkadii. O pisarstwie Zygmunta Haupta* [Against entropy, against arcadia. On Zygmunt Haupt's prose] (Kraków: Instytut Literatury, 2021).

<sup>12</sup>Maciej Nowak, "Uporczywa bezsilność sztuki, czyli Haupt i granice literatury" [Persistent helplessness of art, i.e. Haupt and limits of literature], *Roczniki Humanistyczne* vol. 1 (2018), 83.

<sup>13</sup>Miłosz, Górczyńska, 10, 13. For a similar discussion specifically about Eastern borderlands, *ibidem*, 15-16. "Detail" is a key notion for Miłosz's works as well – I shall return to that issue at the end of this paper.

ern borderlands, especially mythologizing Galicia<sup>14</sup>. However, this is a separate discussion, beyond the scope of this paper, in which I will focus on the role of details in Haupt's world. Andrzej Niewiadomski writes about "plotlines, images, motifs, characters, events" migrating between Haupt's texts of various genres, and the "dilemma of «detail»", which is especially significant in the context of this paper<sup>15</sup>. Niewiadomski tries to identify what systemic references can be found "in the maze of those details"<sup>16</sup>. What is significant – neither Miłosz, nor Niewiadomski mention this – the lexeme "details" appears in Haupt as a metaliterary, migrating phenomenon. However, I shall use it as an operative notion – and thus bracket the axiological connotations present in Miłosz, and assume Haupt did not analytically exhaust it in the context in which I use it here.

The way in which this observation connects with the memorialist trend in the reception of Haupt's works is clear – the details have their source in biographical-historical experience. But what is his attitude to the fictionalist model? I would put it simply: Haupt's narrator presents "details" from lost time not as facts, but as potentialities, as non-necessary phenomena. However, this does not mean that they are fictional, that they were used in the "as if" mode. The richness of Haupt's world is based on details not being facts, but rather possible, non-necessary epiphanies. Marek Zaleski was the first one to use the notion of epiphany in this context: referring to the motif of the "moment" in the story *Szpica* [Spearhead], Zaleski observed that "Haupt's description clearly suggests that this moment is unpredictable: it is an epiphany. But Haupt's narrations are an attempt at repeating such an experience, evoking it again from the past, using eidetic imagination, which interacts with memory"<sup>17</sup>. Apparently, such a combination of experience and imagination is in line with the memorialistic and fictionalistic trends described above, developing them towards phenomenology and Proust. I believe that the epiphany interpretation of Haupt's memory – suspended between involuntariness and effort – proposed by Zaleski, remains relevant. However, it lacks the less subjective and less consciousness-based dimension of space, i.e. a connection of the experience of time with the element, which plays a significant role already in Proust<sup>18</sup>, and it is clearly an integral part of Haupt's writing. In answer to the question where this bottom-up epiphany combines memory with imagination, Dorota Utracka discusses the "variability" of Haupt's prose as a "playful strategy"<sup>19</sup> – reminding Rutkowski's fictionalism. Indeed, Haupt's epiphanies often appear as full-fledged plot scenarios which suspend the main plot. By supplementing mnemopoetics

<sup>14</sup>On "the construction of the Eastern borderlands' myth" see Przemysław Czapliński, "Shifting Sands: History of Polish Prose, 1945–2015", in: *Being Poland: A New History of Polish Literature and Culture since 1918*, ed. by Tamara Trojanowska, Joanna Niżyńska, and Przemysław Czapliński, with the assistance of Agnieszka Polakowska (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018), 373–375. Czapliński: "nostalgic conjuring of the eastern Borderlands as an alternative to nationalistic Europe" (*ibidem*, 380).

<sup>15</sup>Niewiadomski, "Jeden jest zawsze ostrzem", 192, 205.

<sup>16</sup>Niewiadomski, "Jeden jest zawsze ostrzem", 205.

<sup>17</sup>Marek Zaleski, *Formy pamięci. O przedstawieniu przeszłości w polskiej literaturze współczesnej* [Forms of memory. On presenting the past in contemporary Polish literature] (Warszawa: IBL, 1996), 51–52 (more extensively: 50–66).

<sup>18</sup>On the earthly dimension in *In Search of Lost Time*, see Ernst Robert Curtius, *Marcel Proust* [1925] (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1961), 91–95 (chapter "Die menschliche Flora").

<sup>19</sup>Dorota Utracka, "Teksty-nomady? Wariantywność jako strategia gry w prozie Zygmunta Haupta" [Nomad text? Variability as a game strategy in Zygmunt Haupt's prose], in „*Jestem bardzo niefortunnym wyborem*”. *Studia i szkice o twórczości Zygmunta Haupta*, edited by Andrzej Niewiadomski, Paweł Panas (Lublin: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej, 2018).

with a geopoetic perspective, we can however add that this openness is more than just a game – it constitutes the elementary structure of Haupt’s poetic world<sup>20</sup>.

## The figure of remembering “nothing but...” and the appearance of details

In Haupt’s memory mode the background is fundamental, which leads to something I call *elementary memory*. Details seem to appear as a peculiar side effect of the anamnesis of a specific element – on the immanent level in a text, this is their most general “reference point” or “construction”<sup>21</sup>, problematized and highlighted by Niewiadomski in a number of important microinterpretations. However, I am more interested in the source of details in elementary memory than in their connection within a (fluid) system. This is a recurring situation in a number of Haupt’s most famous stories. The intimate relationship between details and the elements is also confirmed by Haupt’s dispersed texts, some of which only recently have been published for the first time, such as fragments of *Zabawa w “zielone”* [Playing “green”] (first published in 1950). In that story, the narrator is lying on grass and contemplating the role of the element in the origins of artistic prose:

It will suffice that a lost eyelash falls on this surface of nothingness [“green” – Ch.Z.], in an arched trajectory, a thin comma, and you can construct a whole world around it.

Do not be afraid of it, let yourself do it, force yourself to do it, if need be, risk it – this experiment is worth your while.

And so as **I am lying on grass and nothing more**; cicuta next to me, thistles, silvery wormwood, buttercups like flames, thyme, bindweed, bindweed whirling, wild oat, like a vagabond, cheerful and truculent, fat yellow marigolds<sup>22</sup>.

The narrator radically reduces the world to the element. Curiously, the effect of the focus on the alleged “nothingness” of this world is differentiation – clearly an epiphany, although a very “grounded” one. The scene is taking place at present, or – due to its fragmentary syntax – beyond time. The crystallizing model has an almost universal meaning in Haupt’s prose, where anamnesis is typically signaled with “nothing but”: the narrator stresses multiple times that he remembers **nothing but** the one, holistic element. In that moment “nothing but” transforms into a space of arising potentialities. Consciousness is doubtlessly engaged in that process<sup>23</sup>. This connects elementary memory with classical-modernist epiphany. However, the role of “phenomenological” consciousness is relativized and trans-subjectively transgressed

<sup>20</sup>I understand geopoetics literally as a way of writing about the earth – or, more generally, about the elements. See Andrzej Niewiadomski, „Czym jest, czym (jeszcze) mogłaby być «geopoetyka»? [What is «geopoetics», and what (else) could be?]”, *Teksty Drugie* 5 (2018) for a systemic reflection upon geopoetics as a vague sub-discipline in literary studies. Edward Kasperski discussed Haupt’s “immanent geopoetics”, and Elżbieta Rybicka – geopoetics as “a characteristic of Haupt’s works”, which is supposed to be reflected in a specific “interpretative method” under the same name (*ibidem*, 91–92).

<sup>21</sup>Niewiadomski, „*Jeden jest zawsze ostrzem*”, 205.

<sup>22</sup>Zygmunt Haupt, *Z Roksolanii. Opowiadania, eseje, reportaże, publicystyka, warianty, fragmenty (1935–1975)* [From Roksolania. Stories, essays, reportages, articles, variants, fragments], edited by Aleksander Madyda (Toruń: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Mikołaja Kopernika, 2018), 274. All highlights by me, Ch.Z.

<sup>23</sup>For a slightly different context, see Rambowicz, 800–804 (chapter “Przestrzeń jako sceneria aktywizująca świadomość” [Space as a consciousness-activating scenery]).

by the “nothing but” figure, which only seems faulty. Everything suggests that this relative independence from the subject is essential for achieving the effect of non-necessity.

Miłosz does not discuss elementary memory, but Andrzej Stasiuk – also a writer and not a critic – did important initial work in this context. Stasiuk defined Haupt’s narrative as “the fire of a fire”, in which everything that is being told – the details of Galician life – is brought into a process of “annihilation”, and so a sphere of its “salvation”<sup>24</sup>. According to this metaphor, elementary movement in memory burns the things that are remembered, it changes their state. Although Stasiuk does not explain what state this is, in my interpretative perspective what is at display is precisely a state beyond necessity.

*Deszcz* [Rain] (1953), probably the most widely discussed story by Haupt, seems to be a clear example of this model. However – surprisingly – such an extrapolation has never been proposed. In criticism, *Deszcz* has been described as characteristic of Haupt, but the way in which the past is evoked in it has not been compared to similar devices used in his other stories. In *Deszcz* three detailed scenarios of what the narrator-protagonist could have been doing in a provincial town emerge from his remembering **nothing but** rain, grey, and wet greenery from a one-day visit. The three scenarios are: a date, a minor business trip (the narrator was promised a small sum of money), and a contract killer (to shoot someone in the back). Since he cannot exclude any of the three possibilities, at the end when, as if on screen, we have seen many stories, the narrator concludes that he **only** remembers **rain** for certain<sup>25</sup>. It is impossible to miss the metapoetic trope, which precedes this conclusion. The speaker presents the following auto-interpretation in the form of a question: the sense of the present short “oeuvre” is supposed to contain all “possibilities and variants”, at the same being open an “open work” the blanks of which the reader can fill in while reading. Moreover, according to the narrator, rain turns out to be a parable about the futility of all things mundane: everything in life will, sooner or later, be literally wiped away by time.

Perhaps those auto-interpretative tropes – the open work and the parabolic mode – truly contain the artistic-philosophical message of *Deszcz*. However, we should ask to what extent those three scenarios are marked as memories, and to what – as fiction? It would be a mistake to postulate a dichotomy here: memory *versus* fiction. Compared to the elementary memory of rain, those three incidents seem to be made up, but each has its own degree of probability: the first one (end of love) seems to be the most probable, partly because it resembles the end of the love story from Haupt’s *Madrygał dla Anusi* [Madrigal for Anusia] (1949). The second scenario (business) seems somewhat comical and improper, as it is about a small sum of money – still, it may have an autobiographical foundation, as Haupt always had financial problems and was often in debt<sup>26</sup>. Finally, the third scenario (assassination) seems to be deliberately exaggerated in its brutality, or even impossible in Haupt’s world, which we typically get to know through the lens of a first-person narrator; in the light of this scenario the text would not be classified as memorialistic. I believe that we are dealing with an ekphrastic effect here – an internalized ekphrasis of a detective movie, with the intense rain as “element of cinema”

<sup>24</sup>Andrzej Stasiuk, “Odwrócona ciemność” [Reversed darkness], in: Zygmunt Haupt, *Baskijski diabeł*, edited by Aleksander Madyda (Warszawa: Czytelnik, 2007), 15.

<sup>25</sup>Haupt, *Baskijski diabeł*, 275–278.

<sup>26</sup>I would like to thank Andrzej Niewiadomski for this tip.

(Robert Bird<sup>27</sup>), a naturalized image of the celluloid on which details appear. Rain would thus be a media metaphor (Haupt's expression according to which the details appear "because of that rain"<sup>28</sup> fits this very well). This hypothesis has not been verified, but it would seem that the cinematographic trope may complete the parallel between Haupt's writing and painting, which has been a recurring motif in criticism since Czapski. To support this hypothesis, we could mention *Szpica*, in which the narrator talks about his ability to see himself as a character in a movie<sup>29</sup>.

At the same time, we should observe that if the second, and especially the third scenario seem to move from mnemopoetics to a kind of popular fiction – *pulp fiction*, so to say – it is not pure fiction nonetheless. Popular cinema belongs to the lost world no less than what the narrator experienced "autobiographically"<sup>30</sup>. Both life reality and popular culture can be reflected in elementary memory and (for a moment) come to the fore. Moreover, the introduction of the behavioral plot-line from popular culture does not mean that the story is deprived of a certain moral concern; it is possible to read the story in a way that recognizes a hierarchical amplification in the three scenarios of *Deszcz*, i.e. admitting guilt, in the process of which the truth is gradually revealed, and the third scenario then turns out to be the only one worth considering. What remains problematic is the fact that it disagrees with the letter of the narration itself – the narrator does not favor the murder scenario (even if this importance seems to be implied by its position on the list). Neither does he put forward any clear suggestions that the first two scenarios should be read as dodges and steps leading to admitting guilt, because indeed, the third scenario maintains its status of a potential, unconfirmed version. Just as what the narrator from the somewhat related *Jak wiosna przyjechała* [When spring arrived] (1951) says about remembering lost love by the wind: "all that happens as if without any foundation, to be taken on faith, for what would be the source of certainty here? nothing: not reserved, not secured by a deal or contract"<sup>31</sup>.

The narrator's voice in Haupt's stories cannot always be directly attributed to the experiencing "I". In some cases it can be described as a captious and commenting listener. In *Coup de grâce* (1950) the narrator presents events from other people's lives (although ones he knows well)<sup>32</sup>. Writing about an incident that is both succinct and tragic, he observes: "I have been told how it is told, but it can be recreated in some way until the ultimate limits of reality"<sup>33</sup>. He achieves what the reader in *Deszcz* is supposed to fill in through such "recreation". However, the question arises how to understand the phrase "until the ultimate limits of reality". It leads to the very center of our problem – the abundance of possible details. I am not sure if this is justified in this specific case from *Coup de grâce*, but with some reservations I would understand that phrase in such a way that the element transgresses the ultimate limits of reality as an inevitable condition for the details to appear.

<sup>27</sup>Robert Bird, *Andrei Tarkovsky: Elements of Cinema* (London: Reaktion Books, 2008). Bird reconstructs Tarkowski's cinematography, using elements (earth, fire, water, air) as analytical categories.

<sup>28</sup>Haupt, *Baskijski diabeł*, 275.

<sup>29</sup>Haupt, *Baskijski diabeł*, 596.

<sup>30</sup>On Haupt and cinema in a broader perspective see Rafał Szczerbakiewicz, "Haupt idzie do kina" [Haupt goes to the cinema], in: *Jestem bardzo niefortunnym wyborem*. *Studia i szkice o twórczości Zygmunta Haupta*, red. Andrzej Niewiadomski, Paweł Panas (Lublin: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej, 2018).

<sup>31</sup>Haupt, *Baskijski diabeł*, 316. Translation mine, PZ.

<sup>32</sup>Haupt, *Baskijski diabeł*, 210. Translation mine, PZ.

<sup>33</sup>Haupt, *Baskijski diabeł*, 210. Translation mine, PZ.

Haupt's element is no *tabula rasa*, no monochrome, as demonstrated clearly by *Szpica*. The narrator of this story about military service presents himself as a "fortunate choice" for the vanguard because he can "encroach in the surrounding vastness". At the same time this ability proves to be such a great disadvantage that it consumes all his attention, while a spear's vigilance "should be impersonal, completely flat, as then its surface will reflect every detail, every sign is supposed to be reflected and scream in a crazy spasm of alarm"<sup>34</sup>. In abstract terms: this concept of space is not about a black-and-white model of potentiality and actuality, but about the complete participation in an element which is supposed to facilitate the free appearance of details.

I believe that the animated element is key in Haupt's memory poetics. Let us analyze it using another example: in *Balon* [Balloon] (1970) memory and retrospection are compared to looking at a rearview mirror while driving at full speed. Again, this is a model of a surface (this time – artificial) on which the details of life appear – details which reach the driver by mediation of the surrounding landscape only to disappear in the mirror, "getting smaller, losing their shape", but the narrator observes that against that momentary loss "memory helps us"<sup>35</sup>. *Balon* presents a memory model which is able to inflate even the most minute details to a "surreal" size in the course of unexpected plot twists – and as such it is a model of grotesque space but also of valorized deformation. However, we cannot extrapolate this image of a mirror, it is not typical for Haupt's prose. More numerous are the cases in which memory requires an unconditional placing in nature's element.

Here are a few examples which provide a better picture of the model of the possibility of details out of elementary memory. First, *Czuwanie i stypa* [Vigil and funeral reception], which is the original, longer version of *Stypa* [Funeral reception] from *Pierścień z papieru* [Paper ring]<sup>36</sup>. There is a description of snow as a dynamic, active element. In the context that interests me, the moment when the phrase "nothing but" appears is decisive:

It is starting to snow, it is snowing persistently, endlessly, and when you press your face against a cold window pane, you will see **nothing but** a blizzard and a swarm of birds, capricious, circling here and there, you lose any sense of whether they are flying down from the sky, or up from the ground, you lose all sense of space, am I here? or am I there? where are the ones further away? they are passing by one another, some white, some black, contours of objects, trees, houses, they are all becoming blurred.

Contours become blurred; chaos is growing. However, the sentence following the quote above introduces a new level of detail:

[...] people behind them are sneaking like conspirators, but they cannot escape what marks them and burdens them and sits on their arms and backs, throws a coat and *delia* of comical dignity over them, it is hanging in a melted drop off their noses, it stars over their lashes dips their moustache in unsweetened snow ice and they are surprised, once they get home, that they find melting kaleidoscope

<sup>34</sup>Haupt, *Baskijski diabeł*, 596.

<sup>35</sup>Haupt, *Baskijski diabeł*, 549.

<sup>36</sup>Haupt, *Baskijski diabeł*, 191–196.

stars on their sleeves, and each is different and crystallized in a well-thought way, and unparalleled in their melting impermanence<sup>37</sup>.

The description shifts smoothly from the chaotic element to crystal-clear details: eyelashes, moustache, sleeves stiff from the cold. Perhaps this leap from the element to details represents the kind of “surreal” accumulation of details which Haupt will later discuss in *Balon*. However, what is important, in *Czuwanie i stypa* they emerge from a memory of the overwhelming element rather than from an artificial mirror (although perhaps a melting one, like in a painting by Salvador Dali).

In *W Paryżu i w arkadii* [In Paris and in arcadia] (1945) Haupt describes German troops during World War I, i.e., at the time when he was a child, with extensive use of enumeration – a typical device in his prose. After listing a great number of war details across roughly half a page, he notes: “But all that is covered by a cloud dust kicked up by the passing infantry”<sup>38</sup>. This is how dust – a natural element in a very volatile form – joins the details *post festum* and renders the abundant description in fact impossible, as those details should be invisible if dust covers them. This logical break supports even the hypothesis of the basic role of the element: it is more important that details appear in some relation to the element than that they are actually seen. In *Polowanie z Maupassantem* [Hunting with Maupassant] (1943) the “whiteness of snow” forces the narrator to “expect a number of more or less fantastic possibilities”, and while remembering lost time, “new circles and new associations emerge”<sup>39</sup>. In *Gołębie z placu Teodora* [II] [Pigeons from Theodore’s square] (1944) the titular square is transformed from an actual place into “an image of its own imagination”, as details seem to exist only as freely imagined<sup>40</sup>.

In a way, the fantastic tendency constitutes a formal rather than thematic category here. The very mode of emerging details, i.e., the birth of reality unburdened by necessity, is “fantastic”. A similar, empirically impossible visuality can be observed in *Biały mazur* [White mazurka]. The narrator describes ants crawling on the ground, while he would like to “roll his eyes to look inwards”<sup>41</sup>. The more clearly individual ants are visible, the more problematic the very act of looking becomes. A metaphorical variant of this model can be found in *O Stefci, o Chaimie Immerglücku i o scytyjskich bransoletkach* [On Stefcia, On Chaim Immerglück, and on Scythian bracelets] (1953), where memory – here clearly traumatized by a sense of guilt related to the death of Galician Jews in the Holocaust<sup>42</sup> – is a troublesome catch of fish “in water so great that it is black”<sup>43</sup>. A more melancholic type can be found in *Meine liebe Mutter, sei stolz, ich trage die Fahne* (1951), where cemetery greenery proves to be the only probable “memorial” of people

<sup>37</sup>Zygmunt Haupt, „Czuwanie i stypa”, *Kultura* 2-3 (1950), 128.

<sup>38</sup>Haupt, *Baskijski diabeł*, 223.

<sup>39</sup>Haupt, *Baskijski diabeł*, 279.

<sup>40</sup>Haupt, *Baskijski diabeł*, 319.

<sup>41</sup>Haupt, *Baskijski diabeł*, 288.

<sup>42</sup>See Marek Wilczyński, “Zapowiedź rzeczy przyszłych. Szyfr zagłady w galicyjskich opowiadaniach Zygmunta Haupta” [Foreshadowing future events. Holocaust code in Zygmunt Haupt’s Galician stories], and Antoni Zajac, “«Nie gość, nie intruz, nie mieszkaniac, jestem jak duch...». Psychotopografie pamięci w twórczości Zygmunta Haupta” [Not a guest, intruder, inhabitant, I am like a ghost... Psychotopographies of memory in Zygmunt Haupt] – both in the current issue of “Forum of Poetics”.

<sup>43</sup>Haupt, *Baskijski diabeł*, 235.



killed in the war (“**nothing** was left for their monument, **only** that spring greenery”)<sup>44</sup>; the impermanent blooming grass becomes a place of memory inscriptions rather than gravestones.

In *Madrygał dla Anusi* [Madrigal for Anusia] sand is the leitmotif, and it can even be considered one of the protagonists. There is a recurring scene, in which the titular, adored Anusia throws sand on the narrator on a beach<sup>45</sup>. Towards the end he realizes that everything between him and Anusia was built on “volatile sand”<sup>46</sup>, which brings to mind the *vanitas* topos from *Deszcz*. It is impossible to ignore the significance of those salient metaliterary references, which sometimes are almost too explicitly exposed. That comment probably does not contain the whole truth about sand in *Madrygał dla Anusi*; for sand is more than just an image of fragility, it is at the same time the condition of the unusual, extraordinarily concrete sensuality of the narration. The love is built on sand, and so “it has no future”. Indeed, but the poetics of this madrigal is built on sand as well, and it reaches unusually plastic sensuality. Sand becomes an extension of touch<sup>47</sup>.

## Limits to elementary memory: culturalism, emigration

As I have tried to demonstrate, in Haupt’s works memory and fiction are not mutually exclusive – they are mutually dependent, if we take a closer look at how details appear as potentialities through elementary memory. I hope that this model has become clear based on the discussed examples.

Now I would like to move on to considerations regarding the limits to this model in Haupt’s prose. I think that there is at least one serious, persistent limiting factor, which is difficult to miss: what Andrzej Mencwel has called “Polish culturalism”, i.e. an attitude – taken to extremes by the philosopher Stanisław Brzozowski – that sees first and foremost chaos in nature, and thus a challenge to organize it and produce human values<sup>48</sup>. I understand culturalism not in its narrow sense, as an attitude characteristic of the Polish left, which out of necessity strives towards immanently justified fairness and social advancement<sup>49</sup>. Haupt might have rejected namely the Promethean implications of that attitude. What I mean is rather a general fear of the “nonhuman” world, about which Brzozowski had written so passionately<sup>50</sup>. Culturalist (in this understanding) mentions of the alien, inscrutable, and hostile element can already be found in Haupt’s early works; take for instance *Polowanie z Maupassantem*, where

<sup>44</sup>Haupt, *Baskijski diabeł*, 257.

<sup>45</sup>Haupt, *Baskijski diabeł*, 263, 264, 265, 274.

<sup>46</sup>Haupt, *Baskijski diabeł*, 265.

<sup>47</sup>“My Anusia is throwing sand on me, lying, from her pink hands, like from an hourglass, and she is burying me in this white sand. As I am lying I can see her from below, kneeling on the sand, her thighs thick and hard above her knees, and her knees with whitened skin, and her swimsuit is stuck to her belly, and the wonderful dimple between her breasts, like a promise, and she is laughing, and when she lifts her head off the hot sand, her cheek is running towards her chin, and her hair, in the messiest bun, is cutting her neck.” Haupt, *Baskijski diabeł*, 263.

<sup>48</sup>Andrzej Mencwel, *Etos lewicy. Esej o narodzinach polskiego kulturalizmu* [The left’s ethos. Essay on the birth of Polish culturalism] (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Krytyki Politycznej, 2009), especially the afterword, “Etos, lewica, kulturalizm” [Ethos, the left, culturalism], 255–261.

<sup>49</sup>See Mencwel, 257–258.

<sup>50</sup>Brzozowski influenced the interwar right through the motif of “fighting” the nonhuman world; the right saw this fight as a premise for the process of rebuilding a strong national state.

the narrator comments on “the greenery of humanity in a wild, chaotic world, which is yet to become a world”<sup>51</sup>. In this context, Haupt’s elementary memory is characterized by a non-obvious ambivalence. He maintains axiological-cultural distance in order to “secure” his dangerous participation in the celebration of an unchained element – in fact, on closer inspection, he did that from the very beginning. And this means that at some point the “naked”, uncanny nature and “entropy” left behind by technological civilization coincide, as projected by Haupt already in 1943, and developed in his later works (at least in a hidden way)<sup>52</sup>. There is a striking analogy with another European emigrant in America, Theodor W. Adorno, who – although using completely different diction and without references to the scientific metaphor of entropy – sought a third way between an all too organized and pre-cultural, wild nature in the concept of “cultural landscape” (*Kulturlandschaft*)<sup>53</sup>.

The culturalistic factor is intertwined with the two emigrants’ melancholic attitude to nature. In Haupt’s stories which are set in America nature becomes a largely dangerous category. *Cyklon* [Cyclone] (1948) speaks of the “element’s dread”<sup>54</sup>. Later, in *Z kroniki o latającym domu* [From the chronicle of a flying house] (1959), we see a sandy beach after a sea storm – a place that is clearly ugly, and what is more significant, a place where details lose any meaning to the observer:

Fine white sand, as if made of shattered glass. It is white, and then suddenly dirty, wet, brown. And there is a shell on it, but not some fancy sea conch, twisted, spotted, or creatively painted, no: a shallow brown boat, with mother-of-pearl shimmering on the inside, similar to our freshwater mussel. Then there is a stick, a rotten tennis shoe, and then nothing, only sand. And if you lift your eyes, there is flat, dirty-green water, and only when you look at the horizon, it becomes emerald, green, very green. And there are clouds above.

So this is it? Water, sand, garbage, sky. It is so far? And so unsurprising<sup>55</sup>.

The details are highly “entropic” – especially the tennis shoe – and they seem random, but not exempt from necessity like in Haupt’s most famous stories. They are burdened with factuality. Perhaps the fact that the details cannot be integrated into a whole – as happened, despite much resistance, with the element (rain, wind, snow, grass, dust, sand) in the Galician stories – results from their unfreedom. In *Entropia* – written still during the war – Haupt outlined a horrifying vision of a dreadful ecosystem reduced to one, uniform season that deprives all details contained within it of their living source. He juxtaposed this vision with a peculiar incantation: “My country is a country of four seasons” – again, this sentence is interrupted

<sup>51</sup>Mencwel, 281.

<sup>52</sup>Mencwel, 21–32.

<sup>53</sup>See Theodor W. Adorno, *Ästhetische Theorie* [1970], edited by Gretel Adorno, Rolf Tiedemann (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2012), 106–107: “Wie sehr die Vulgäranthese von Technik und Natur irrt, liegt darin zutage, daß gerade die von menschlicher Pflege ungesänftigte Natur, über die keine Hand fuhr, alpine Moränen und Geröllhalden, den industriellen Abfallhaufen gleichen, vor denen das gesellschaftlich approbierte ästhetische Naturbedürfnis flüchtet. Wie industriell es im anorganischen Weltraum aussieht, wird einmal sich weisen. Der stets noch idyllische Naturbegriff bliebe auch in seiner tellurischen Expansion, dem Abdruck totaler Technik, der Provinzialismus einer winzigen Insel”.

<sup>54</sup>Haupt, *Baskijski diabeł*, 721.

<sup>55</sup>Haupt, *Baskijski diabeł*, 415.

by a half-page-long apposition after “My country”, and so by an intrusion which iconically highlights the appearance of details as dependent on the four seasons<sup>56</sup>.

In *Z kroniki o latającym domu* the devastation of a country which is not “his” inspires the narrator’s empathy. Perhaps his reaction becomes more understandable from the perspective of Haupt’s conscious, proud, slightly ironic provincialism, which is to some extent characteristic of small motherlands literatures<sup>57</sup>. Looking at devastation makes the European observer want to rebuild – in a way, to reverse entropy:

One would like to rescue that house on the distant, foreign seaside. To straighten it, stretch it over the shamelessly hollow roof of branches, leaves, stitch it up with hay, cover this nudity, help it, make it into a shelter against the elements once again, right the wrongs, scare away evil, fight the abandonment and homelessness that follow it<sup>58</sup>.

It is not surprising that the wish to protect – *nota bene* not oneself in the first place – works as a reflection of the enumeration of the details dispersed on the beach. The presence of water is also highlighted in (seemingly) more peaceful scenes, such as in *Luizjana* (1948), the first story from Haupt’s American period:

And the river is walking in front of us with its huge surface and is tickling the timber of our raft. It is flowing from some distant world like from a cave, and it is supposed to be a bright day and the sky is stretching wide above us, its extent and heavy force unknown and impenetrable, its wet element is alien to us, we are used to draught and solid ground, walked on and trampled, it makes it cave-like and alien, and incomprehensible<sup>59</sup>.

It is impossible not to notice that in this reportage-like story (narrated in the present tense) the element of water is associated with something “classically” sublime, as a father is trying to show his son the Mississippi in all its overwhelming vastness. He cares about their shared journey, because (as he says) “it is good to have an opportunity to deal with greatness”; and in accordance with the classical logic of the sublime he adds that “it may be a paradox that we are so tiny compared to something so huge”<sup>60</sup>.

Nevertheless, the image of water dangerously entering land, which ultimately fails to lift the subject’s spirit, recurs, for example, in *Kawaler z morskiej pianki* [Bachelor from sea foam] (1950):

Only the alien sea roars and hums down there. Only the iron sea is coming and hitting against the rocks. I am supposed to be standing here and watching the alien element rubbing against the land, peeling gravel off it, spitting at it with its salty foam. Only alien water, incomprehensible and indifferent, it is shattering deliriously and consuming the land – the last of what is left under my feet<sup>61</sup>.

<sup>56</sup>Haupt, *Baskijski diabeł*, 21–22.

<sup>57</sup>See Czaplinski, 375.

<sup>58</sup>Haupt, *Baskijski diabeł*, 420–421.

<sup>59</sup>Haupt, *Baskijski diabeł*, 691.

<sup>60</sup>Haupt, *Baskijski diabeł*, 687.

<sup>61</sup>Haupt, *Baskijski diabeł*, 394.

Just as with the lack of exchange between the element and the details of the damaged beach, we are dealing here with the disrupted “economy” between water and land. This dysfunctionality is an allegory of banishment in general, but perhaps especially of the condition of European emigrants in America. Thus, the strangeness of nature, intensifying in this period in Haupt’s work, unexpectedly has a lot in common with the strongly “European” or “Middle-European” attitude to nature, as showcased in Czesław Miłosz’s *Widzeniach nad Zatoką San Francisco* [Visions from San Francisco Bay] (1969):

[...] there is a continent spirit which maliciously destroys anything you try to try, to build for yourself. The huge size of the huge size of the area, violated yet always triumphant, folded land skin belittling all our mistakes and achievements. In the face of the Feather River pine trees or rocky headlands puked over with explosions of ocean whiteness, where wind brings roars of sea lions, or on the slopes of Tamalpais, from where the jagged land is the first day of creation, I am standing stripped, deprived. I have achieved nothing, I have not participated in any evolution or revolution, there is nothing I can boast about, because the whole collective game of gloating and humiliating collapses. Strangeness, indifference, stone everlastingness (or resembling stone) and I, compared to it a flash of a fraction of a second, tissues, nerves, the heart pump, subject to the same incomprehensible rule which rules what came before me, and what for me is only a self-sufficient anti-sense<sup>62</sup>.

However, whatever threatens with limitations, paralyzed creativity and memory in Haupt (although it also inspires a sympathetic reaction)<sup>63</sup> – in Miłosz it has a completely different meaning. In *Widzenia...*, the strange, jugged nature teaches the poet a lesson in humility. Although the landscape presents itself as sublime – like the river in Haupt’s story – it does not make the observer feel subjectively elated (unlike the classical sublime), it remains only a “a self-sufficient anti-sense” – and it is precisely in this state of complete disappointment that the Eastern European poet’s maturing takes place. Through this parallel we are returning to Polish culturalism in America – as we know, a few years earlier Miłosz had written a thoroughly culturalist book about Brzozowski (*Człowiek wśród skorpionów* [Man amongst scorpions], 1962).

At this point a revealing contrast with Adorno’s vision can be seen. In his description of the Californian landscape in *Minima Moralia* (1951), Adorno stresses – similarly to Miłosz – the untamed wildness of nature untouched by civilization<sup>64</sup>. However, contrary to Miłosz, who is still somewhat skeptical, Adorno leaves no room for doubt; he is openly contemptuous to what he perceives as the pre-cultural ugliness of American nature. Curiously, as for Haupt, for Adorno it is the lack of

<sup>62</sup>Czesław Miłosz, *Widzenia nad Zatoką San Francisco* (Paryż: Instytut Kultury, 1969), 12.

<sup>63</sup>Haupt discussed this issue explicitly: “Regardless of how I highlight the aspect of banishment, I do not feel separated from American life”. Zygmunt Haupt, “Pisarz polski osiedlający się w Nowym świecie. Odpowiedź na ankietę «The Pacific Spectator»” [Polish author moving to the New World. In answer to «The Pacific Spectator» survey [first draft, 1949], in Haupt: *Z Roksolanii*, 167. For Haupt’s uncharacteristic literary struggles with American reality, see Rafał Szczerbakiewicz, “Ameryka Haupta. Próby literackie [Haupt’s America. Literary attempts] (*Luizjana, W barze Harry’ego, Zamierzcze echa, Oak Alley nad Missisipi, Cyklon*)”, paper read at the conference “Zygmunt Haupt. Warsztat pisarski – inspiracje – konteksty” [Zygmunt Haupt. Writing – inspirations – contexts], AMU Faculty of Polish and Classical Philology, 20–21 September 2021. For a more general discussion of Haupt’s emigration based on latest sources, see *Zagubiony wśród obcych. Zygmunt Haupt – pisarz, wygnaniec, outsider* [Lost among strangers. Zygmunt Haupt – author, outcast, outsider] (Bielsko-Biała – Kraków: Wydawnictwo Naukowe ATH, Instytut Literatury, 2019).

<sup>64</sup>Theodor W. Adorno, *Minima Moralia: Reflections from Damaged Life*, translated into Polish by Małgorzata Łukasiewicz, afterword by Marek J. Siemek (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1999), 50 (*Minima Moralia. Reflexionen aus dem beschädigten Leben* [Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1951], 54–55).

balance and mutual relationship that proves to be the main problem. A modern highway remains a foreign body, it does not harmonize with the surrounding landscape: “These are always inserted directly in the landscape, and the more impressively smooth and broad they are, the more unrelated and violent their gleaming track appears against its wild, overgrown surroundings”<sup>65</sup>. However, it should be noticed that for Haupt driving through a vast, open area is a valuable means for recognizing American landscape. This is how his first-person narrator describes the experience of travelling along the Mississippi with his son: “We are driving, and this is the essence of life at the moment”<sup>66</sup>. Adorno claimed that “the hurrying eye cannot retain what it has seen merely from the car, and the vanishing landscape leaves no more traces behind than it bears upon itself”<sup>67</sup>. According to Miłosz, man in America, cut off from “menacing, monstrous sights” of nature and its details, was “a mere observer sitting inside a machine”<sup>68</sup>. In a stark contrast to this European pessimism, the perspective conditioned by driving allows Haupt a new, creative look at the charming sight of the river: “We are now carried by the sight of the river. When you look up at its waters, and then quickly look back, you can see the difference in the water levels, that indeed there is up and there is down”<sup>69</sup>. And so what Miłosz deemed impossible, writing that “the car already pre-fabricates what we look at through the window”<sup>70</sup> becomes possible in Haupt.

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In recent years Haupt has been portrayed as an isolated, paradoxical phenomenon, a representative of “strange modernity”<sup>71</sup>, and at the same time an anarchist-traditionalist, fictional memorialist, documentary mannerist, or “watchmaker-dynamiter”<sup>72</sup>. Insofar, my conclusions do not throw any new light on his works. However, I hope that I have managed to capture the close connection between memory and nature, characteristic of Haupt’s poetics. The “nothing but” figure used in confrontation with nature allows for details to appear in a realm of non-necessity. This as it were grassroots version of epiphany allows for the experience of unheard-of freedom through memory.

translated by Paulina Zagórska

<sup>65</sup>Adorno, *Minima Moralia...*, 50 („Diese sind allemal unvermittelt in die Landschaft gesprengt, und je glatter und breiter sie gelungen sind, um so beziehungsloser und gewalttätiger steht ihre schimmernde Bahn gegen die allzu wild verwachsene Umgebung”, *Minima Moralia. Reflexionen aus dem beschädigten Leben*, 54–55). English version translated by E.F.N. Jephcott, Redwood Books, 1997: 48.

<sup>66</sup>Haupt, *Baskijski diabeł*, 690.

<sup>67</sup>Adorno, *Minima Moralia...*, 50 („Denn was das eilende Auge bloß im Auto gesehen hat, kann es nicht behalten, und es versinkt so spurlos, wie ihm selber die Spuren abgehen”, *Minima Moralia. Reflexionen aus dem beschädigten Leben*, 55).

<sup>68</sup>Miłosz, 33. Miłosz asks rhetorically: “Am I an exception for needing a sensual relationship with details?”. From his European perspective he even talks about Americans’ “scarcity of details from childhood” (*ibidem*, 34).

<sup>69</sup>Haupt, *Baskijski diabeł*, 691.

<sup>70</sup>Miłosz, 34.

<sup>71</sup>See the chapter *Zygmunt Haupt’s “strange” modernity* in Niewiadomski, “*Jeden jest zawsze ostrzem*”, 117–168.

<sup>72</sup>Jan Zieliński, “Watchmaker-dynamitar”. From the archive of *Gałęź zachodnia* in the present issue of “Forum of Poetics”. The title is a reference to a sentence from *Biały mazur*: “In fact it is watchmakers who are the most skilled dynamitards and bomb-throwers, good old-fashioned bombs from the previous century”, Haupt, *Baskijski diabeł*, 293.

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# KEYWORDS

## EASTERN BORDERLANDS

### ZYGMUNT HAUPT

*Czesław Miłosz*

### emigracja

**ABSTRACT:**

Recapitulating major tendencies in Haupt studies, the paper revisits the question of memory models in works by Zygmunt Haupt, and proposes to extend the established, “epiphanic” reading of Haupt’s prose with a geopoetic perspective. Based on numerous examples from Haupt’s works, the paper demonstrates how exuberant details of the lost Galician world tend to grow on the ground of an element seemingly remembered as monolithic and absolute (rain, snow, sand, grass, air, dust, etc.). A certain type of epiphany crystallizes in the emergence of details, focused on surroundings rather than on the subject. Thanks to this externalization of memory through the elements, details gain their specific non-necessary status expressed in the typical Hauptian enumerations. This model is limited by “Polish culturalism” (Andrzej Mencwel), according to which nature constitutes first and foremost “a nonhuman world” – an idea that Haupt seems to share in a moderate, apolitical form. Haupt’s culturalist attitude is further explored by a comparison of some of his American stories with negative descriptions of Californian landscape by Czesław Miłosz and Theodor W. Adorno.



p a m i ę ć

geopoetyka

CENTRAL EUROPE

GALICIA

**NOTE ON THE AUTHOR:**

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“Not as a guest, not  
as an intruder, not  
as a homeowner,  
I am like a ghost....:”  
Psychotopographies of  
memory in Zygmunt Haupt’s  
short stories

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Complicated and complex temporal and spatial constructions are Zygmunt Haupt’s trademark. Most critics have usually focused on the temporal aspect but recently, perhaps thanks to Andrzej Niewiadomski’s breakthrough article,<sup>1</sup> geopoetics and humanistic geography began to be employed to explore the spatial (often dialectic) dichotomies of Haupt’s short stories. Familiar and alien, tamed and unknown, monotonously empty and filled with objects, static and mobile – such conceptual pairs work together in Haupt’s prose and they determine complex literary topographies found in the writer’s works. They can be read as spatial palimpsests composed of at least three layers: (i) spaces remembered (often in a distorted or affective form); (ii) spaces in which the I currently functions; and (iii) imaginary/imagined spaces,

<sup>1</sup> See: Andrzej Niewiadomski, “Przestrzenie Zygmunta Haupta (Rekonesans)” [Zygmunt Haupt’s Spaces (Reconnaissance)], *Roczniki Humanistyczne* [Annals of Arts] LXVI, vol. 1 (2018): 159–178.

inspired by texts, images and other cultural artifacts.

Critics have studied literary cartographies of places which the writer knew well, such as Zhovkva or Lviv. They have also analyzed Haupt's attempts to map the new reality in which the writer found himself after WW2 and after his subsequent emigration to the United States.<sup>2</sup> Jerzy Stempowski thus described Haupt's talent for creating detailed visual images of places and spaces in his letter to the writer:

[...] as a painter with a more static imagination, you evoke distinct images from your memory, and you do not arrange them in a continuous series. Petrarch knew how to do it as well. He described all his places of residence as if he was doing topographical exercises. His Latin letters are full of such precise descriptions. [...] Literature today is remarkably omphaloscopic; it has no vision of the outside world. Dostoyevsky, who traveled so much by rail, never mentioned seeing anything from the window of his train. [...] For half a century, Dostoyevsky had been the favorite author of the European elite, and with him began the era of omphaloscopia in literature. [...] In this perspective, your stories are a revelation. They bring to mind Petrarch's magic.<sup>3</sup>

Krzysztof Rutkowski suggests that by "omphaloscopia" (literally "the contemplation of one's navel") Stempowski means introspective and self-reflective writing.<sup>4</sup> If this is indeed the case, I do not agree. An insightful topographical description does not rule out subjective speculation; on the contrary, it is in and through this description that the autofictional I functions in/as space, leaving its mark on the literary map of both real and unreal places. Thus, the imaginative and the imagined completes the geographical real. In *Lutnia* [The Lute], we read:

O "Białokamiennej" cóż to ja mogę napisać o "Białokamiennej"? Że tam nigdy nie byłem, że to daleko, gdzieś za światami, że nasi nie nazywali jej po imieniu, bo imię odnosiło się do całych obszarów, ale nazywali ją po prostu "Stolicą". [...] Toteż jeżeli już chcę ją sobie wyobrazić, to mojej wyobraźni pomoże wyobraźnia innych ["The white-stone city [Moscow]," what can I write about "the white-stone city"? That I have never been there, that it is far away, somewhere beyond the worlds, that locals didn't call it by its name, because the name referred to whole areas, but simply called it "The Capital." [...] Therefore, if I want to imagine it, the imagination of others must help my imagination].<sup>5</sup>

<sup>2</sup> See: Stanisław Wawrzyniec Zając, "(Nie)spotkanie Ameryki. Zygmunta Haupta «Podróż do Louisiany» [(Un)meeting America. Zygmunt Haupt's "Journey to Louisiana"]", in: *Pisarz na emigracji. Mitologie, style, strategie przetrwania* [Writer in exile: Mythologies, styles, survival strategies], ed. Hanna Gosk, Andrzej Stanisław Kowalczyk (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Elipsa, 2005), 236–252; idem, "Inna emigracja Zygmunta Haupta. Przyczynek do biografii" [Zygmunt Haupt's Other Emigration. Contribution to the Writer's Biography], in: *Powrześnie emigracja niepodległościowa na mapie kultury nie tylko polskiej. Paryż, Londyn, Monachium, Nowy Jork* [Emigration in the search for freedom after September 1939 on the not only Polish cultural map. Paris, London, Munich, New York], ed. Violetta Wejs-Milewska, Ewa Rogalewska (Białystok: Trans Humana, 2009), vol. 1, 813–827; Paweł Panas, "Zygmunt Haupt – europejski wygnaniec" [Zygmunt Haupt – European exile], *Konteksty Kultury* 16, vol. 2 (2019): 221–231. Texts in which Haupt directly juxtaposes the landscape of New Orleans with the topography of Volhynia, like, for example, in his letter to Zdzisław Ruszkowski, are particularly interesting: "The city is vast. It resembles towns which you would find in Volhynia: wooden houses, wide streets, lined with telegraph poles." Quote after: Panas, 224.

<sup>3</sup> Letter from Jerzy Stempowski to Zygmunt Haupt dated January 11, 1966, Jerzy Giedroyc, Zygmunt Haupt, *Listy 1947–1975* [Letters 1947–1975], ed. Paweł Panas (Warsaw: Towarzystwo 'Więź', 2022), 272–273. Emphasis – A.Z.

<sup>4</sup> Krzysztof Rutkowski, "W stronę Haupta" [Towards Haupt], *Teksty Drugie* 1-2 (1991): 113.

<sup>5</sup> Zygmunt Haupt, "Lutnia" [The Lute], in: *Baskijski diabeł. Opowiadania i reportaże* [The Basque Devil: Stories and Reportages], ed. Aleksander Madyda (Wołowiec: Czarne, 2016), 447. Further quotations from this volume are marked with the letters BD and the page number.

In *Lutnia*, Haupt also writes about his intention to decipher the blank spots on the map, that is unknown or unexplored areas,<sup>6</sup> which are also an inseparable part of his own, intra-subjective cartography. On the other hand, in toponymic enumerations, so often used by Haupt, we can notice subjective self-writing:

Jak zasłuchać się w imiona rzek, dolin, lasów, szczytów górskich, wsi, miasteczek i miast, to jedne swym brzmieniem przywołują całe panoramy światów zagrzebanych na cmentarzyskach pamięci, a znowu inne zaskoczą nie znanym odkryciem, nigdy nie zasłyszonym czemuś echem. Rumienimy się ze wstydu, że jak można tak było zapomnieć, roztrwonić, porzucić albo zagłuszyć w sobie, kiedyś nie przyswoić bogactwa, które dopiero przypadek, dobry los potrafi nam dzisiaj przywrócić [If you listen to the names of the rivers, valleys, forests, mountain peaks, villages, towns and cities, some of them evoke whole panoramas of worlds buried in the cemeteries of memory, and others surprise you with a discovery, an echo you have never heard before. We blush, ashamed. How could all this be forgotten, squandered, abandoned. How could we silence all this in ourselves? How could we fail to assimilate this richness that today could be restored to us only by chance, good fortune?].<sup>7</sup>

Such enumerations also play a mnemonic role – they help us remember images of the past that slip away into oblivion.<sup>8</sup> As Frances Yates points out, spatial mnemonics, especially Guido Camillo's famous theater of memory,<sup>9</sup> has been the most popular form of aiding one's memory (especially in the Renaissance) – one would create an image of a complex place/building where words and images were deposited. "Seeing the places, seeing the images stored on the places, with a piercing inner vision which immediately brought to his lips the thoughts and words of his speech."<sup>10</sup> Thanks to, among others, spatial enumeration, a literary text can function as an external, prosthetic memory, in which real topographies, spatializations of time in memory, and descriptions of imaginary places are subject to an anachronistic or layered synthesis. Thus, the text resonates with the inner landscape of the I – with what is well lit and always accessible to consciousness, and with what is secret and hidden in the nooks and crannies. Blank spots – gaps, omissions, unknown or no longer known places – may be found both in the interior and on the exterior. Imaginative and fantastical transfers take place between the creative subject and the (mimetically recreated, processed by memory, artistically produced) space. In the text, they are depicted in and through interpenetrations, interactions and interdependencies which challenge the notion of the I as a sovereign, isolated entity. The hegemony of the (allegedly completely autonomous) subject is thus questioned. Indeed, the subject in Haupt's short

<sup>6</sup> In *Lutnia*, Zhovkva is such a blank spot. From 1951 to 1991 Zhovkva was renamed Nesterov, so Haupt used this name. See: Tomasz Gruszczyk, "Ocalenie czy oblężenie? Pod naporem pamięci" [Salvation or Siege? The onslaught of memory], in: *Oblężenie: strategia pisarska – postrzeganie świata – motyw literacki* [Siege: writing strategy – perception of the world – literary theme], ed. Małgorzata Krakowiak (Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, 2014), 81–82.

<sup>7</sup> Zygmunt Haupt, "Inwokacja do powiatu latyczowskiego" [Invocation to the Letychiv province], in idem: *Z Roksolanii. Opowiadania, eseje, reportaże, publicystyka, warianty, fragmenty* [From Red Ruthenia. Stories, essays, reports, journalism, variants, fragments], ed. Aleksander Madyda (Toruń: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Mikołaja Kopernika, 2018), 117.

<sup>8</sup> See: Andrzej Niewiadomski, "Manierystyczny teatr pamięci jako słownik świata w prozie Zygmunta Haupta" [The mannerist theater of memory as a dictionary of the world in Zygmunt Haupt's prose], *Acta Humana* 1 (2014): 31.

<sup>9</sup> Frances Amelia Yates, *The Art of Memory* (London: Routledge, 1964), 156.

<sup>10</sup> Yates, 4.

stories may not be separated from the world around him; on the contrary, the self is virtually unable to assume an external position, as he is overwhelmed with words, memories, and objects. The relations between the I and the non-I described in Haupt's prose can therefore be discussed with the help of psychoanalytic spatial constructs which problematize the relation between the subject and the object, such as the Moebius strip or the Klein bottle.

The two meanings of the word "topography" refer to two orders, whose strict separation is questioned in Haupt's prose. Firstly, there is topography in geography: as in arrangement, distribution, and the study of space. The second meaning refers to the Freudian concept of mental topography, that is the metapsychological structure of the mind, the complexity and functional segmentation of which lies at the heart of the psychoanalytic concept of the self. Sigmund Freud developed two topographical models. The first consists of the conscious, the preconscious, and the unconscious. The second consists of the Id, Ego and Superego. Although Freud considered discussing them using spatial metaphors, in *Culture and its discontents* he rejected the idea of the mind as a city. He returned to this idea, however, in 1938, where he wrote that "Space may be the projection of the extension of the psychical apparatus. Psyche is extended; knows nothing about it."<sup>11</sup>

The philosopher Victoria Nelson, who finds inspiration in psychoanalysis, agrees with Freud. In *The Secret Life of Puppets*, she thus described the concept of psychotopography:

To these interior psychic regions as we find them projected onto an outer landscape I would like to give the name *psychotopography*. A *psychotopographer* is the artist who devotes herself to describing – with varying degrees of awareness about the true nature of the subject – the images of these inner regions as she discovers them in an imagined exterior landscape. Working backward from the sum of these details, the reader gains a picture not of what lies without but of what lies within. In art that has a *psychotopographic* dimension every object, every cloud in the sky, every piece of furniture, even the ground itself is a piece of psychic matter that we perceive to be extruded from the main character or the narrator by extension from the author himself, consciously or unconsciously). The contents of the psyche are cast like a net in ever-widening circles, first onto immediate surroundings – furniture, rooms, houses – then onto the larger natural landscape, finally even onto the globe itself.<sup>12</sup>

The subject not only functions in the text as a single coherent self but also extrudes a piece of his psyche (internal topography) and locates it in the represented world of the text. He may thus present his psychological conflicts and doubts. He may consciously or unconsciously present those aspects of his life that appear to him as a secret, as *terra incognita*. We are also talking about past experiences which are often inaccessible – they may only be projected into the space of the text (the space in the text). Psychotopography is more than the psychization of the landscape – it helps us redefine the relations between (the author's, the character's, and the narrator's) memory and the represented world. Thanks to psychotopography, the places and spaces found in Haupt's works – the flying house, the Valley Without Exit (from *Baskijski*

<sup>11</sup>Sigmund Freud, "Findings, Ideas, Problems", trans. James Strachey, in: *The Standard Edition of Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. 23 (London: Vintage, 1973), 300.

<sup>12</sup>Victoria Nelson, *The Secret Life of Puppets* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 110-111.

*diabeł* [The Basque Devil]) or the Przemyśl monastery with its cells and crypts (from the cycle about *Nietota*) – may be read as reservoirs of encrypted subjective meanings. In this sense, the language of space is the language of distorted memory – it relies on paramnesia, that is the superimposition of the imagined and the real, the past and the present.<sup>13</sup> Such palimpsestic layering of memory and space may be found in many Haupt's works. In the present article, I will focus on two representative, albeit contrasting, examples, namely "Gołębie z placu Teodora" [Pigeons from Theodor's Square] from the early cycle of short stories about a Lady and "O Stefci, o Chaimie Immerglücku i o scytyjskich bransoletkach" [About Stefcia, Chaim Immerglück and Scythian bracelets] from *Pierścień z papieru* [The Paper Ring].

Theodor's Square, which may be found in the first story, was real. It was "the quaint and special place" in Lviv. It was "a very important market"<sup>14</sup> where poultry was sold cheaply. So, it is not surprising that the narrator and the Lady want to buy pigeons there as a gift for her aunt.<sup>15</sup> Ultimately, however, this does not happen, and the square itself remains only an imagined space, an almost mythical place. Although this place has "escaped into the unknown," its phantasmatic representation, a copy deprived of the original,<sup>16</sup> is inscribed in the protagonist's memory:

Ten prezent to miał być właśnie z placu Teodora. Więc jeszcze zanim tam wybraliśmy się, stworzyłem ten plac bardzo kunsztownie i precyzyjnie w mojej wyobraźni. [...] Mieliśmy tam pójść i znaleźć ten plac Teodora. Nietrudno przyszłoby to, bo już z daleka powinno by się go poznać. Wiatr nanosiłby stamtąd postać lekkie i widmowo błędzące w powietrzu, wahające się niezdecydowanie, i białe i kolorowe pióra ptasie [...]. No i zaraz zaszumiałyby i zatoczyłyby się zaułkami gwar ptasich głosów, wieża Babel rozhovorów i konkurs piękności głosów, i challenge wytrwałości na czas i wysokość tonów. A gdybyśmy tam doszli, to znaleźlibyśmy się w jarmarku kolorów i dźwięków, jak na tle śpiewającego dywanu. Pewien nawet nie jestem, czy w fantazji swojej nie przywidywałem [sic! – A.Z.] nawet zagubienia się i zatracenia naszego w tym oczekiwanym świecie, najbardziej dopasowanym do naszego ówczesnego świata [This gift was supposed to be from Theodor's Square. So even before we went there, I had created a very detailed and careful model of this square in my imagination. [...] We were supposed to go there and find Theodor's Square. It would not be difficult, because you should be able to recognize it from afar. The wind would carry from there light and spectral messengers, wandering in the air, hesitating indecisively, and white and colored bird feathers [...]. And soon we would hear through the alleys the hustle and bustle of the birds, the Tower of Babel of languages, and the voices, each wishing to be named the most beautiful, and each

<sup>13</sup>Marek Zaleski writes: "The integrity of the world in the frame of representation, as if in a window open to eternity, and the illusion that the past and the present coexist help create the effect of paramnesia, that is the perception of time that unites the previously distinguishable spheres of the past and the present into one indistinguishable whole. Paramnesia is how people whose sense of time has been disturbed experience time." Zaleski, *Formy pamięci* [Forms of memory] (Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo Słowo/Obraz Terytoria, 2004), 52–53.

<sup>14</sup>Jan Gieryński, *Lwów nie znany* [Lviv unknown] (Lviv: Księgarnia A. Krawczyńskiego, 1938), 101. Quote after: Aleksander Madyda, *Haupt: monografia* [Haupt: A monograph] (Toruń: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Mikołaja Kopernika, 2012), 249.

<sup>15</sup>The Lady's aunt plays an important but grim role in this cycle of short stories – she forced the Lady to have an abortion and she ended her relationship with the I. Madyda suggests (having analyzed Amelia Łączyńska's memoirs) that the Lady was based on Maria Chobrzyńska, whose aunt was Julia Ledóchowska. See: Madyda, 221.

<sup>16</sup>Cf. Zaleski, 37, 194–197, especially Zaleski's analysis of Jacques Derrida's remarks about the original (or lack thereof) and repetition.

wishing to be the highest and the loudest. And if we got there, we would find ourselves at a fair of colors and sounds, as if thrown against a singing carpet. I am not even sure if I did not foresee in my fantasy that we would get lost in this imagined world, the world most suited to our world] (BD 103–104).

The unusual, sensual image of the potential square remains but an image. Instead of buying pigeons themselves, the couple asks "człowieczka w zniszczonym ubraniu i niewyraźnego" [an indistinct man in tattered clothes], perhaps a petty criminal, to do it (BD 104). He is to deliver a cage with the pigeons to the narrator the next day. This plotline, however, is temporarily interrupted and replaced by a meticulous description of the tenement house where the narrator lives. At first glance, it is a realistic space, not subject to subjective deformations, but doubt creeps in when the editorial office of "Głos Powszechny" [The Daily Voice], where the protagonist works, is described.<sup>17</sup> Although it occupies only a few rooms, it is "prawdziwy labirynt, skomplikowany jeszcze przez całe continuum szaf, półek i stosów starych gazet" [a labyrinth, further complicated by a whole continuum of cupboards, shelves and stacks of old newspapers] (BD 106) with various secret passages – one of them leads to the printing house. The narrator uses it every day when he leaves and returns to his apartment. From a spatial perspective, it is an interesting sequence, but it is difficult to determine its role in the narrative structure of the story. Could the editorial office located in the tenement house where the narrator lives be a topographical metaphor of Haupt's prose? Especially since, as it is mentioned in the story, "nieodpowiedzialne zainteresowania, nuda i autotematyzm" [irresponsible interests, boredom and self-referentiality] (BD 106), make him read magazines about horses and astronomy (and these are important themes in Haupt's stories), all day long.

In the story, one of the characters, Mr. Szczepaniak, connects the "pigeon" plotline and the tenement house passage. Mr. Szczepaniak is a self-proclaimed pigeon expert and a typesetter in the printing house. Having received the birds from the "suspicious" man (the man hands the birds to them anxiously, as if something bad had happened in Theodor's Square or as if he had stolen the pigeons), the narrator and the Lady ask Mr. Szczepaniak for his professional opinion. Although Szczepaniak reluctantly agrees ("państwo szukali na placu – tam mają – ale ja tam – panie tego – ja nie chodzę" [you were looking in the square – they have birds there – but I – my dear sir – I do not go there] (BD 108)), inspection does not take place. Immediately afterwards, the typesetter mysteriously disappears from the story (for a couple of paragraphs). The suspicious pigeon deliverer reappears in his place and continues to praise the birds he bought. At the same time, the real-unreal Square itself returns, and its vision is amazing: "instynktownie czarował tym Placem i wydawało się, że zamknięty z ptakami w klatce plac Teodora wylewa się przez uchylone drucziane drzwiczki na pokój, wylewa z okien w podwórze kamieniczne i milczącym zgiełkiem przewala się ponad dachy domów" [Instinctively, he was doing magic with this Square and it seemed that Theodor's Square, closed with the birds in the cage, spills out through the half-open wire door into the room, pours out of the windows into the tenement courtyard and with a silent tumult rolls over the roofs of the houses] (BD 108).

<sup>17</sup>"Głos powszechny" [The Daily Voice] was based on "Dziennik Polski" [The Polish Daily] where Haupt worked. See: Madyda, 247–248.

Theodor's Square quite literally appears in the courtyard – as cages with pigeons – brought by men who arouse a sense of fear and danger in the characters. Mr. Szczepaniak was right to distance himself from the traders from the square, who probably form a kind of “pigeon mafia.” When they come to the backhouse, Mr. Szczepaniak – who reappears in the story – has a heart attack. And then he is shown grotesquely diminished, apparently traumatized by something that happened outside the text, by something that we could not have witnessed:

Pana Szczepaniaka znalazłem w kącie, dłubiącego w kasztach; na mój widok obrócił pobladłą twarz i powiększone źrenice w czerwonych obwódkach powiek. Był zdekoncertowany [sic! – A.Z.] i szeplecił [sic! – A.Z.] coś niewyraźnie, z czego jedynie „panie – tego” zrozumiałem. Nie chciałem w końcu ze mną zresztą mówić i wypraszał mnie bezceremonialnymi gestami z zecerni. Co u licha?! Chłopcy z zecerni śmiali się niespokojnie, a ja, nie mogąc nic wydusić ze starego, wróciłem na górę [I found Mr. Szczepaniak in the corner, playing with cases when he saw me, he turned his pale face and his dilated pupils surrounded by the red rims of his eyelids. He was anxious and he whispered something indistinctly; I only understood “my dear sir.” In the end, he did not want to talk to me, and he unceremoniously asked me to leave the typesetting room, waving his hands. What the hell?! The typesetting boys laughed uneasily, and I, unable to elicit a response out of the old man, went back upstairs] (BD 109).

Mr. Szczepaniak reminds us of harassed and degraded men from Bruno Schulz's short stories,<sup>18</sup> including the “bird-like” father whom Adela throws out of the attic, his “kingdom,”<sup>19</sup> and the bizarre uncle Jerome who stubbornly repeats the words “Everybody is talking about it: Dee-da...,”<sup>20</sup> thus alluding to some undefined catastrophe. Mr. Szczepaniak also reminds us of Franz Kafka's prose, where we find men who are terrified and traumatized by life. Kafka literally appears in the story, in the next paragraph, which at the same time reads like Schulz's “Birds.” Haupt's story also reaches its climax at this point – the phantasmatic Theodor's Square literally explodes in the narrator's apartment and the narrator is still dazed and confused by what happened earlier:

Mam się za człowieka pozytywnego i oto, jak w powieści Kafki, coś irracjonalnego zaczyna dziać się koło mnie. Astralna orgia. Panna w obłokach i tęczy skrzydeł gołębic, tęczowe lśnienia promieni słonecznych na szybach, furkot i łopotanie lotek, barokowe i ażurowe klatki i zgrzyt nasion pod obcasami. Przedmioty tracą swe oczywiste wymiary: bliższe, wbrew prawidłom perspektywy, uciekają i maleją jak widziane przez odwróconą lornetkę, inne, dalekie, chorują na elephantiasis i rosną, i mętnieją w swym nienaturalnym przybliżeniu, klasyczna jedność i czasu, i akcji, jakiej podlegamy, gubi się w tym delirium [I consider myself a positive person, and suddenly, like in one of Kafka's novel, something irrational begins to take place around me. An astral orgy. The Lady is surrounded by clouds and a rainbow of pigeon wings, while sunlight, split into rainbows, dances on

<sup>18</sup>Andrzej Niewiadomski carried out a comparative analysis of selected aspects of Haupt's and Schulz's works – idem, “Jeden jest zawsze ostrzem”. *Inna nowoczesność Zygmunta Haupta* [“One is always the blade.” Zygmunt Haupt's other modernity] (Lublin: Wydawnictwo UMCS, 2015), 71–117. On “Gołębie z placu Teodora” see: 82, footnote 30.

<sup>19</sup>Bruno Schulz, “Birds”, in: idem, *The Fictions of Bruno Schulz: The Street of Crocodiles & Sanatorium Under the Sign of the Hourglass*, trans. Celina Wieniewska (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2011).

<sup>20</sup>Bruno Schulz, “Dodo”, in: idem, *The Fictions of Bruno Schulz: The Street of Crocodiles & Sanatorium Under the Sign of the Hourglass*, trans. Celina Wieniewska (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2011).



the windowpanes. Whirring and fluttering feathers, baroque and transparent cages, and the crack of seeds under my heels. Objects lose their proper dimensions: the ones which are closer, contrary to the rules of perspective, move away and shrink as if they were seen through inverted binoculars, others, far away, suffer from elephantiasis and grow in size and become cloudy and vague in unnatural close-ups, the classical unity of time and action to which we are subjected disintegrates in this delirium] (BD 110).

The bird carnival of anomic transformations, brought to life by imagination, ends quickly and fades into oblivion, as if this wonderfully described deformation never happened. Still, it does influence the text, as it undermines the coherent, linear, diegetic order. Perhaps it is one of the original scenes of Haupt's literary project. The metaphors of subjectivity that appear in his subsequent works often refer to a hybrid universe, contaminated with *bios*, such as plants, exhibits from natural history museums, or mythical creatures.<sup>21</sup> We can see that in the final sentences of "O Stefci, o Chaimie Immerglücku i o scytyjskich bransoletkach:" "Czy zapomnieć mi o królowie scytyjskiej, czy zagłuszyć jej wspomnienie w zgiełku wielkiej i puste ptaszarni, *aviarium*, jakim jest moja niespokojna świadomość?..." [Should I forget about the Scythian princess or silence the memory of her in the hustle and bustle of a large and empty aviary, an *aviarium*, that is my restless consciousness?...] (BD 237).<sup>22</sup>

"O Stefci, o Chaimie Immerglücku i o scytyjskich bransoletkach" focuses on the ethical aspects of remembering and forgetting. The narrator wishes to return to the lost world in and through literary repetition; he fears, however, that he will not be able to do justice to the past in and through a fictional (that is to say unfaithful) narrative. He does not want to create a trivial *ersatz* of the real and he is aware of the fact that writing about the past may lead to that: "[...] czyż nie łapię się sam na praktykowaniu czarnoksiężskich sztuk, wywoływaniu duchów, czyż nie jest to czymś z kategorii jarmarcznego panoptikum i estrady z magikiem i mistrzem autohipnozy na gościnnych występach?" [...] I catch myself doing magic tricks, summoning ghosts; isn't it some sort of a fairground panoptic with guest appearances by a magician and a hypnotist?] (BD 229). This flashback is further haunted by a sense of guilt, which is perhaps related to the fact that in the past the narrator hurt Stefcia, several years his junior, and to the fact that the image of the girl fades in his memory or appears to be a product of someone else's memories (which the I only heard as a story). These feelings make him go back in time in and through a narrative.

<sup>21</sup>In "Jeździec bez głowy" [The Headless Horseman], these two metaphors meet: "Nasza wyobraźnia stworzyła już świat mitologii – stworów nie zredukowanych, ale pomnożonych, złożoną morfologię, tłum gatunków nowych: centaury, harpie, gryfy, chimery – najcudaczniejsze kombinacje tułowi, ogonów, skrzydeł i szponów, jakby prostota i celowość naturalnego wzoru nie wystarczała. [...] Inna mitologia otwiera przed nami perspektywę korytarzy i sal [sic! – A.Z.] muzealnych, gdzie w kurzu piętrzą się garby, pancerze i narośle paleontologicznych wykopalisk, ich palczaste ślady łap pozostawione w piaskowcu i błony skrzydeł zwapniałe w bryłach kamienia tu przydygowanych. Te mitologie pomnażają, kombinują, łączą formy, składają je w mnogości" [Our imagination has already created a mythological world – creatures are not reduced but multiplied, a complex morphology, a multitude of new species: centaurs, harpies, griffins, chimeras – the most bizarre combinations of bodies, tails, wings and claws, as if the simplicity and purposefulness of the natural order were not enough. [...] A different mythology opens up the perspective of corridors and museum halls where humps, shells and outgrowths of paleontological excavations, their fingerprints left in the sandstone and wing membranes calcified in lumps of stone are piled up in the dust. These mythologies multiply, combine, unify, and integrate forms in their complexity] (BD 347–348).

<sup>22</sup>On the aviary, see: Niewiadomski, "Jeden jest zawsze ostrzem", 19–24, 422–423.

The most intriguing, however, are those parts of the story in which the narrator does not so much go back in time as fantasizes about actually returning to the town of his youth, which he left when the war broke out. However, since he never actually returned, the narrator must use his imagination and act in and through fiction.<sup>23</sup> The town, over the years, has changed; it seems empty and lifeless. The protagonist is a soldier – perhaps he experiences this flashback during his stay at the front, or perhaps two different past episodes overlap. Although he comes back primarily to find Stefcia, he first meets the Jewish shopkeeper Chaim. The man looks at him calmly and with understanding, which is unusual, because the narrator may be read as a harbinger or the personification of war. The world in this imaginary memory slowly turns into a specter; it has been infected with death and thus turned indifferent:

Może błysk porozumienia w oczach Chaima Immerglücka to złudzenie, a może ma ono skontrastować, powiedzieć, że nic już nie jest ważne. Że ludzie, jakich widzę na rynku: zbierająca tępych twarzy, oddech ich zmieszany z powietrzem – a żebym był nawet zwiastunem złych czy dobrych nowin, to nie ma dla nich apelu. Są bezosobowi jak chrobot, szurgot szczurów za ścianą domu, bezosobowy i martwy chlupot wody [...]. Mimo że jest trochę ludzi tych, to wydaje się pusto. Tych trochę ludzi to tak jak muchy na twarzy osoby umarłej. Podrywają się z brzękiem z kącików ust, z kącików powiek i zaraz potem siadają z powrotem [...] [Perhaps the understanding in Chaim Immerglück's eyes is an illusion, or perhaps it is meant to provide a contrast – to say that nothing is important anymore. That the people I see in the square: a collection of dull faces, their breaths mixed with air – and even if I was a harbinger of bad or good news, they do not care. They are impersonal like squeaking and chirping rats behind the wall of a house, impersonal and lifeless like burbling water [...]. Even though there are quite a few of these people there, the square seems empty. They are like flies on the face of a dead person. They fly off, buzzing, from the corners of the mouth, from the corners of the eyes, and then land on them again [...]] (BD 234).

In the structure of the dying city, the people-flies are helplessly stuck, trying to survive another day. This terrifying passage describes a suspenseful moment, as if before the final catastrophe, but also, as Marek Wilczyński writes, “with one being fully aware of its consequences.”<sup>24</sup> The metal seller's name becomes, involuntarily, an ironic and pessimistic emblem – Chaim Immerglück means (loosely translated from Hebrew and Yiddish): “always happy (*immerglück*) in life (*chaim*).” This is not the only time when Haupt refers to the Holocaust. For example, in the short stories from the *Nietota* cycle we come across the image of trains going to concentration camps, and in “Lili Marleen” there is a mention of a Jewish cemetery devastated by the Nazis (BD 471). And yet it is the allusive horror in “O Stefcu, o Chaimie Immerglücku i o scytyjskich bransoletkach” that seems to be the most poignant. We do not witness the exuberant anarchism of imaginative anomie, as in “Gołębie z placu Teodora;” it is rather a haunting vision of

<sup>23</sup>This is in line with Haupt's biography, who “once confessed to his family that the Poland of his youth ceased to exist, and therefore visiting contemporary Poland would be traumatic.” Madyda, 126.

<sup>24</sup>Marek Wilczyński, “Polska proza galicyjska przed wojną i po wojnie. Bruno Schulz w kontekście literatury katastrofy” [Polish Galician prose before and after the war. Bruno Schulz and the literature of disaster], *Schulz/Forum* 5 (2015): 14.

a ghostly state of emergency with its "black-an-blue topography,"<sup>25</sup> which Witold Gombrowicz discreetly and concisely, yet disturbingly, has (not) described in *Pornografia*.<sup>26</sup>

During his journey, the narrator finally reaches Stefcia's house. However, the girl is not there. He finds nothing (or rather: he finds nothingness) – it is an empty space and it was, surprisingly, left by the escapees (Stefcia and her family) in order. Wion, however, is "świeży papierlep na muchy, nawet niewiele much się jeszcze złapało..." [fresh flypaper, not many flies have been caught yet...] (BD 234) found in the kitchen. Taking into account the image of people as flies and the understatement marked with three dots, we may conclude that this is a metonymic prefiguration of the terrible events to come. In this unusual and "uncanny"<sup>27</sup> space, the protagonist realizes his ontologically questionable status: "[...] chodzę po pokojach – nie gość, nie intruz, nie mieszkaniec, jestem jak duch nawiedzający stare miejsca, przenikający ściany i zamki" [...] I walk around the rooms – not as a guest, not as an intruder, not as a homeowner, I am like a ghost who haunts old places, walking through walls and locks] (BD 234). It is a special kind of Freudian *Unheimlich*<sup>28</sup> – one does not encounter ghosts; one is a ghost.

The trauma-inducing emptiness is the spatial negative of the loved one. Loss is palpable but it does not suspend or end the story; on the contrary, the story resumes; self-referentially, it "wyjścia na spotkanie wymyślonego" [goes out to meet the imagined] ("Warianty" [Variants], BD 569). This new strategy of evoking the past by contaminating it with literary speculation is announced with some hope but hope quickly gives way to fear:

A teraz ubiegajmy zdarzenia. A teraz dopiero niech nam będzie danym naprawdę zatchnąć się dziełem tworzenia. Teraz pomyślmy, jak by to było, gdyby było. Z wielką satysfakcją, na przekór wszystkim innym możliwościom i przeciwnościom, kiedy już nam dane jest stanąć nad wielką głębią spraw, ich szans, odmian, przypadków, nad wielką wodą aż czarną od nieprzeniknionej tajemniczości i aż gęstą od skoncentrowanych w niej, zmieszanych w niej i ciężkich od wyroków dzieł się – zarzucimy z zamachem sieć własnych marzeń. Z takim zamachem, z takim wspaniałym gestem! [...] Boję się i rozpaczam nad tym połowem. [...] Pokryty rumieńcem wstydu, zapatruję się w toń, w ocean przypadkowości [Now let us get ahead of things. And only now let us be truly amazed by the work of creation. Now let us think about what it would be, what it could be like. With great satisfaction, in spite of all other possibilities and adversities, we are given the opportunity to

<sup>25</sup>Witold Gombrowicz, *Pornografia: A novel*, trans. Danuta Borhardt (New York: Grove/Atlantic, 2009), 21.

<sup>26</sup>See, for example, when the characters are in Ostrowiec: "We finally reached Ostrowiec with a loud clatter [...], the little town was the same as ever [...]. Just one thing, an absence that was palpable, namely, there were no Jews" – Gombrowicz, 81. See: Piotr Sadzik, "Nawiasem mówiąc. Język anomii i anomia języka w «Pornografii» Witolda Gombrowicza" [Incidentally. The language of anomie and the anomie of language in Witold Gombrowicz's «Pornografia»], in: *Imiona anomii. Literatura wobec doświadczenia stanu wyjątkowego* [The names of anomie. Literature and the state of emergency], ed. Piotr Sadzik (Warsaw: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 2019), 175–213.

<sup>27</sup>Cf. Anthony Vidler, *The Architectural Uncanny: Essays in the Modern Unhomely* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1992).

<sup>28</sup>On the "uncanny" in Haupt see: Tomasz Mizerkiewicz, "«Ale będę. Ale będę». Proza Zygmunta Haupta a nowoczesna kultura obecności" [«But I will be. But I will be». Zygmunt Haupt's prose and the modern culture of presence], in: *Po tamtej stronie tekstów. Literatura polska a nowoczesna kultura obecności* [On the other side of texts. Polish literature and the modern culture of presence] (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM, 2013), 193–195. In the context of Chaim, see Eric Kligerman's interesting concept of the "Holocaustal Uncanny." See: Eric Kligerman, "A New Category: The Holocaustal Uncanny", in: *Sites of the Uncanny: Paul Celan, Specularity and the Visual Arts* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2007), 23–31.

gaze into the great abyss of matters, chances, varieties, accidents. We are standing over the great water which impenetrable mystery turned black; in it, there flow events, heavy with judgments – let us cast the net of our dreams. With momentum, with gusto! [...] I am afraid of and despair over what I will find in the net. [...] Blushing, ashamed, I stare into the depths, into the ocean of randomness] (BD 235).

Haupt metaphorically compares writing with fishing (one casts a net into the ocean, looking for memories and their alternative versions; alternative memories may be imagined or reimagined). Such aquatic motifs have a psychotopographic dimension – they lie at the heart of the rhetoric of memory in literature, also as regards traumatic memories and experiences. Admittedly, we may be able to see through “pure and transparent waters” and create a mimetic reflection of our memories; more often than not, however, this topos functions in its darker dialectical version, in which we look at deformed shapes which are reflected in the water or at lost, lifeless objects from the past which lie at the bottom of the sea. Stefcia is an undead drowned woman, fished out of the waters of memory and fantasy. Her body decomposes and rots:

Oto wpatruję się z drżeniem w zdobycz – wodne zielsko, zatchnąłem się zapachem butwiejących w wodzie szczątków. [...] Czyżby ciężąca sieci topielica o spuchłych wargach i oczach wyjedzonych przez żwir rzeczny, o rękach pocętkowanych trądem wodnym, czyżby to była Stefcia? [Trembling, I look at what I have caught – weeds, the smell of rotting remains in the water made me gag. [...] Could it be, this drowned woman who is weighing down the net, with swollen lips and eyes eaten away by gravel, with hands covered with water leprosy, could it be Stefcia?] (BD 235–236).

The description is drastic and devoid of sentimental and nostalgic undertones, although it concerns a lost loved one. Apparently, Stefcia can no longer be remembered in a way that is not mediated by distorting repetition. Such deformation is further accompanied by a fictional/fantasy supplement: Stefcia becomes a “rotting bride:”

Weźże tę topielicę za rękę i odprowadź od ołtarza, a ręka ta jeszcze okręcona święconą i ucałowaną stułą. Powiedz ją poprzez próg kościelny, aż niech ugną się resory fiakra, którego chabety przystrojone są w weselne wstążki. [...] Oto następnego dnia, rana małżeńskiego, jest popsuta jak zabawka, jak lalka, w której się coś pokręciło, i już nie mówi więcej: “mama”, a jak ją położyć, to raz na zawsze zamknęła oczy i nie może ich otworzyć [Take this drowned woman by the hand and lead her away from the altar, while the blessed and kissed stole is still wrapped around her hand. Lead her through the threshold of the church; the springs of the carriage drawn by the horses decorated with wedding ribbons should squeak. [...] The next day, on the marital morning, she is broken like a toy, like a doll that has been mishandled, and she no longer says “mama,” and when I lay her down, she closes her eyes once and for all and she cannot open them] (BD 236).

At first glance, this scene shows dreams coming true. Two interpretations are possible. For one, it is an imaginary interlude – an alternative vision of the past. Respectively, it is the only chance for the girl to live – in and through the story. And yet, when the sun rises, Stefcia, who was brought to life by the power of fiction, becomes lifeless; she turns into a doll,

a broken toy.<sup>29</sup> The narrator was right to be uneasy: literary magic is only a trick and it cannot bring the dead matter of the past back to life.

However, the fictional fantasy does not end there – it is replaced by another, even more melancholic one. Its central figure is the tomb of a Scythian princess which the protagonist visits at the end of the story. He thus again explores his psyche:

Na stoku wzgórza [...] jest grób królowny scytyjskiej. [...] Jak było odwiedzić grób królowny scytyjskiej, to nadchodziło się cicho, skradająco, żeby nie zamącić tamtejszego spokoju. Leży tam w swoim scytyjskim diademie [...]. Już dawno zamarło echo tętentu koni po szerokich łąkach nadrzecznych. Bije jeszcze w nas nasze serce, jak echo tamtego tętentu sprzed setek lat. Zakołacze się w nas i przypomnimy sobie, a potem myśl zaświergocze o czymś nieważnym i już tego tętentu nie słyszymy.

Czy zapomnieć mi o królownie scytyjskiej, czy zagłuszyć jej wspomnienie w zgiełku wielkiej i pustejszej ptaszarni, *aviarium*, jakim jest moja niespokojna świadomość?...

[On the side of the hill [...] there is a grave of a Scythian princess. [...] When it was time to visit the grave of the Scythian princess, one came quietly, softly, so as not to disturb her peace. She lies there in her Scythian diadem [...]. The echo of horses galloping on the vast riverside meadows has long since died away. Our heart is still beating inside us, like the echo of these galloping horses hundreds of years ago. We will be struck by something and remember, and then the thought will chirp about something unimportant, and we will not hear the galloping horses anymore.

Should I forget about the Scythian princess or silence the memory of her in the hustle and bustle of a large and empty aviary, an *aviarium*, that is my restless consciousness?...] (BD 236–237).

Following Aleksander Madyda's findings, Andrzej Niewiadomski suggests that Haupt could have been inspired by the story of an accidental (!) discovery of a Scythian burial mound in Ryzhanivka, where a Scythian princess was buried with numerous ornaments and jewels.<sup>30</sup> The crypt built in the text – Princess-Stefcia and the I from the past are both trapped in it – appears in a brief flash only to quickly disappear. It is covered with other thoughts and memories – buried

<sup>29</sup>The figure of a toy can, however, also be dialectical. Let us examine the self-referential fragment from Haupt's "Dziewczynka z nóżkami na księżycach" [The Girl with Her Feet on the Moons] (BD 363–374). Its protagonist, a soldier stationed in France, visits the headquarters of his commanding officer, where, for some unspecified reasons, different "przemysłne kolorowe, łatwe i koszlawe" [colorful, easy and crooked] toys lie on one of the tables (BD 370). The officer constantly winds them up and sets them in motion. Unexpectedly, the I metaleptically "moves away" from describing the represented world, thus showing that playing with the toys is like creating fiction: "Było coś w tej nonszalancji i nieoczekiwaniu zaczepienia się myśli ludzkiej, było w tym coś z fantazji i wielkopańskości, i fanfaronady w dobrym stylu, w tej zabawie w obliczu niebezpieczeństwa czy beznadziejności, jak podziwialiśmy to w skazańcu, który miał pójść na szafot, kiedy znalezionymi na podorędziu nożyczkami obcinał sobie paznokcie, kiedy czytano mu wyrok śmierci. W sekrecie to ja sam zabawiam się takimi mechanicznymi zabawkami. Układam sobie sytuacje, nakręcam je, potem patrzę w ślad tego, jak rozkręcona sprężyna porusza nimi i jak wymyślony mechanizm nimi pokieruje. Już ja sobie przemyślałem porucznika Boczyłę i jego «królowno – kwiecie nenufaru»" [There was something about this nonchalance and unexpectedness of human thought, there was something about fantasy and grandeur and good-natured fanfare in this game played in the face of danger and hopelessness, akin to admiring a convict who was about to die on the scaffold and he was cutting his fingernails with a random pair of scissors when the death sentence was announced. I secretly play with such mechanical toys myself. I arrange situations, wind them up, then watch how the spring propels them and where the invented mechanism leads them. I have already made up my mind about Lieutenant Boczała and his «princess – the water lily»] (BD 371).

<sup>30</sup>Niewiadomski, "Jeden jest zawsze ostrzem", 262, footnote 62. See: Jan Chochorowski, "Scytyjski książe z Ryzanówki" [Scythian prince from Ryzhanivka], *Alma Mater* 99 (2008): 185–195.

under a thick layer of sand. This crypt is also part of the subject's disturbed topography; he becomes the only phantasmatic grave of the lost girl. He tries to undo her death, to keep her as the undead, even if that means being haunted by her forever. These hauntings may finally destroy the boundaries between the I and the Not-I.

In Haupt's works, the spatial organization of the represented world reflects the complex nature of the subject. The I is shaped by distorted or repressed memories which are supplemented by fiction/imagination – they are the source of hope but also disappointment. We should pay special attention to spatial paradoxes and complexities, as they are often the result of psychotopographic contamination, insofar as dreams, artifacts of distorted memories, and objects of unfulfilled desires intertwine. From claustrophobic places to agoraphobic vastness, from attics and hiding places in huge houses to ghost towns – the literary I functions in/as space and writes itself where it seems absent.

translated by Małgorzata Olsza

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# KEYWORDS

*m e m o r y*

## PSYCHOANALYSIS

**ABSTRACT:**

This article analyzes the relations between space and the subject (i.e., the configuration composed of the character's I, the protagonist's, I and the narrator's I) in two short stories by Zygmunt Haupt, namely "Gołębie z placu Teodora" [Pigeons from Theodor's Square] and "O Stefcu, o Chaimie Immerglücku i o scytyjskich bransoletkach" [About Stefcia, Chaim Immerglück and Scythian bracelets]. The author draws on Victoria Nelson's concept of psychotopography – it is a dynamic projection of subjective experiences, memories, and fantasies onto the space of the represented world and at the same time a system of influences and interactions that connect the literary I with the external space. Psychotopographic metaphors often refer to traumatic, repressed or (anamnestic) inaccessible memories.



*Zygmunt Haupt*

# PSYCHOTOPOGRAPHY

## the spatial turn

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# Foreshadowing the things to come: Annihilation hidden in Zygmunt Haupt's Galician stories

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Any examination of a given epic form is concerned with the relationship of this form to historiography.

Walter Benjamin

As we know, almost all of Zygmunt Haupt's works refer to the past, the times before, during, or after WW2. The reader quickly notices that there are long lists of nouns in Haupt's stories, especially in passages that refer to pre-WW2 memories (before the writer's emigration). Such enumerations, which often play a metonymic role, "recall" things, objects, or proper names preserved in memory. They are probably intended to create a textual substitute for a reality which is distant in time and space; they help remember and forget at the same time: remember the past and forget, if only for a moment, about the present. The most characteristic in this respect is the title story in the collection *Pierścień z papieru* (The Paper Ring). It consists of three interrelated lists of nouns which concern various breeds and colors of horses and harnesses, largely unknown to the vast majority of readers today.<sup>1</sup>

The ostentatious matter-of-factness of Haupt's descriptions seems to suggest a realistic representational convention but that could not be further from the truth. Diegesis – storytelling – is more

<sup>1</sup> Zygmunt Haupt, *Baskijski diabeł* [The Basque Devil], ed. Aleksander Madyda (Wołowiec: Wydawnictwo Czarne, 2016), 422–426. All quotations from this edition are marked with the abbreviation BD.

important than mimesis. Every now and then the narrator shares his doubts with us; he is not sure if he can trust his memory and he wonders if, at times, he changes the story or, still worse, adds something that did not happen at all. In this way, the textual islands of the nominal real/ity lose the illusory materiality that realist poetics endows them with and transform into signs. (Let us briefly recall Roland Barthes's *l'effet de réel*: "Semiotically, the 'concrete detail' is constituted by the *direct* collusion of a referent and a signifier; the signified is expelled from the sign, and with it, of course, the possibility of developing a *form of the signified*, i.e., the narrative structure itself. [...] This is what we might call the *referential illusion*."<sup>2</sup>) In Haupt's prose, the lists of objects both complement and slow down the narrative. Emotional and expressive, they are a source of short-term joy for the remembering "I;" they are a substitute for being in a world which has disappeared a long time ago.

However, in Haupt's Galician stories the hidden – things and events that do not belong to the main storyline, to the main narrative – is also manifested in a different way. In a veiled, metaphorical way, the hidden was described at the end of the late story "*Z Laczczyny*" [From the Polish shore] as a play of light among the clouds. It creates a great phantasmagorical picture which is certainly not real:

Wieczór ciągnął się długo. Nad nim pionowo w górę wznosiły się zamki z chmur postawione jeden na drugim. Pomiedzy ich różowymi blankami przedzierało się niebo błękitne i fioletowe w górę, a nad nim nowe kondygnacje murów, fos, przypór i baszt chmurowych. Pomiedzy zamkami otwierały się dalekie krajobrazy w głąb i w górę i cieniowały się liliowo. Były wpośród nich drogi wijące się stokami wzgórz, urwiska, skarpy i przepaście. Pomiedzy murami wznoszącymi się na tych stokach wykwiwały nowe widoki: dalekie i wysokie zbiorowiska chmur jak szranki wojsk uszykowanych do szarży. Wymieniały się pomiedzy tymi widokami tęcze, mosty, łuki, fantastyczne akwedukty, gaje, fontanny, szpalery i perspektywy. I nagle wystrzelała ponad nimi w górę masa wieży aż czarnej od cienia, ażeby przez okna jej ukazać niebo tym różowsze i tym błękitniejsze. Pomiedzy tymi krajobrazami wojny i zawieruchy bitewnej jak strzały z armat i moździerzcy oblężniczych wymieniały się błyskawice pozostałe po burzy. Te dreszcze błyskawic rozświetlały na mgnienie oka partie murów w cieniu i ukazywały ukryte dotąd dla oczu nowe krajobrazy i widoki [The evening dragged on forever. Cloud castles rose above him, one on top of another. Between their pink battlements a blue and violet sky could be seen, and above it, new tiers of cloud walls, moats, buttresses, and towers. Between the castles, distant lilac vistas opened up. Roads winding down hillsides, precipices, escarpments, and abysses. Between the walls rising on these slopes, still new vistas appeared: distant and high groupings of clouds, like armies ready to charge. Among them, rainbows, bridges, arches, fantastic aqueducts, groves, fountains, lanes, and perspectives flickered. And suddenly a tower, black with shadows, shot up above them, so as to show through its windows a sky that was all the more pink and blue. Between these images of war and battle, like shots from siege cannons and mortars, lightning strikes, which were still there after the storm, struck. These shivers of lightning illuminated the dark parts of the walls for a moment and revealed new landscapes and sights hitherto hidden.] (BD 633).

This description, like a palimpsest, has two layers, or a second hidden layer, which one might ignore if one focuses only on the top layer. At first sight, we see colorful clouds – pink, blue, violet, lilac and of course white – which could be found in an Italian Mannerist, Baroque or Rococo painting.

<sup>2</sup> Roland Barthes, "The Reality Effect", in: Roland Barthes, *The Rustle of Language*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1986), 147-148.

On the other hand, the vast architecture of imaginary castles projected onto the clouds, connected by “rainbows, bridges, arches, fantastic aqueducts,” reminds us of Piranesi. Alas, the color black, which Piranesi’s *carceri d’invenzione* are known for, is only “applied” to one tower (which is not illuminated by light). Suddenly, however, these picturesque and slightly theatrical decorations are invaded by troops and battle begins, marked with the zigzags of lightning. Cannons and siege mortars are mentioned; we can thus assume that this is not a 20th-century but rather a 17th-century battle – a siege of Zbarazh, Khotyn or Kamianets-Podilskyi. Be that as it may, the initially idyllic picture reveals a hitherto hidden layer of terror, danger, violence, and death. Such sudden revelations – an apocalypse, a fall, or a disintegration of the world may also be found in Haupt’s other short stories. They do not concern very distant times. While the writer did not draw on his personal experience, he studied historical texts and the personal testimonies of survivors. In the scenery of remembered landscapes and interiors, apocalypse points to the terrible future – the inevitable destiny of Red Ruthenia. The remembering “I,” who usually exists in a specific space and (past) time, is granted access, albeit limited, to events that are yet to take place. Thus, the poetics of literary realism is compromised. As Frank Kermode notes, “[i]t seems to be a condition attaching to the exercise of thinking about the future that one should assume one’s own time to stand in an extraordinary relation to it. The time is not free, it is the slave of a mythical end. We think of our own crisis as pre-eminent, more worrying, more interesting than other crises.”<sup>3</sup> Haupt’s crisis was the end of the world as he knew it, including the end of the Polish world in Galicia and Podolia.

The collection of Haupt’s short stories entitled *Baskijski diabeł* [The Basque Devil], edited by Aleksander Madyda, opens with “Entropia” [Entropy], a story published in 1944. The first paragraph explains what entropy is so that the readers who are not familiar with the basics of physics may also follow the story: “Kto zajmował się termodynamiką, natknął się zapewne na pesymistyczną formułę powiadającą że «entropia wzrasta do zera». Różne temperatury dążą do wyrównania. Takie samo zjawisko inwolucji zachodzi wszędzie, napięcia elektryczne chcą się wyładować, kolory zmieszane dają jeden kolor szary [...] Kiedy się tak wędruje po świecie, wydaje się, że nawet pory roku tracą swe oczywiste granice i zlewają się w jedną szarą, gdyby nawet była kalifornijską wiosną, porę roku” [Anyone who has studied thermodynamics has probably come across the pessimistic rule ‘the change in entropy is zero.’ Different temperatures tend to equalize. This phenomenon of involution takes place everywhere; electric charges want to discharge and colors which are all mixed together produce grey [...]. When you wander around the world, it seems that even the seasons lose their distinct character and blend into one gray season – even if it is Californian spring] (BD 21). However, the story itself, apart from the theoretical introduction, consists of five typographically distinct parts which describe four different seasons. Haupt managed to contain entropy for the sake of recalling the still vivid image of the past. The descriptions of the Galician countryside and nature are, as is often the case in Haupt’s works, vivid and sophisticated. In the second part, shapes of clouds are described in a separate paragraph. We are also offered a glimpse into the future. For example, a falcon is compared to the Hawker Hurricane fighter plane, which the writer was to learn about during WW2 in Great Britain. The last part ends with the image of a town which was not mentioned in the previous parts:

Miasteczko ze swymi domami, które słoty i ubóstwo poplamiały trądem, było szare i płaskie pod sklepieniem niebios. [...] Obszerny rynek jest źle zniwelowany i podłe zabrukowany, ale dzieje się to

<sup>3</sup> Frank Kermode, *The Sense of An Ending* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000), 94.

w cieniu wspaniałej kolegiaty o liniach renesansu tak czystych, że doznaje się wprost fizycznego ukojenia. Harmonia gmachu, jego spokój, duma, skończoność dają wrażenie zamkniętej myśli ludzkiej. To nic, że dzieje się ta architektura na najbardziej ubogim tle, że ubóstwo i pustka jej towarzyszące, zapomnienie i nieuchronna groźba czasu nad nią zawieszona chciałyby pomniejszyć tę wspaniałość. [...] Różowy marmur jest świeży i rumiany, jakby nim okładano ściany nie trzysta lat temu, ale wczoraj. Ciężkie płótna obrazów Altomontego czernią się kolosalnymi kwadratami na murach naw i u dołu wiszą fałdą jak żagle. Alabaster pomników nagrobkowych ma ciepło skóry kobiecej. Kopuła na transepcie pęka i wpuszcza wodospad światła [The town with its houses, which hardship and poverty had stained with leprosy, was gray and flat under the vault of heaven. [...] The big market square is uneven and badly paved, but it lies in the shadow of a magnificent collegiate church with Renaissance lines so clean that the sheer sight makes one experience a physical relief. This well-proportioned building, this calm, proud, and complete structure, is like a complete human thought. It doesn't matter that this architecture is revealed to you against the poorest background; it doesn't matter that the surrounding poverty and emptiness, oblivion and time which loom over it, threaten to diminish its magnificence. [...] Pink marble is fresh and rosy, as if it was put on the walls not three hundred years ago but yesterday. The heavy canvases of Altomonte's paintings are like huge black squares on the walls of the naves and spill out of their frames like sails. The alabaster of tombstones is warm like a woman's skin. The dome above the transept is cracked and a waterfall of light falls in] (BD 31).

The name of the town is not mentioned but anyone who happened to visit Zhovkva should recognize it immediately: the market square is virtually the same (although it is more elevated) and the collegiate church is as magnificent as it used to be (it has been restored relatively recently by a team of Polish conservators). Only Martino Altomonte's paintings commemorating John III Sobieski's victories at Vienna and Párkány are missing, so are the earlier paintings celebrating Stanisław Żółkiewski's victory at Klushino and Sobieski's victory at Khotyn. (Altomonte's paintings will be displayed in the near future in the central part of the restored Sobieski castle). In the story, the market square and the surrounding buildings are somewhat flawed, and John III Sobieski's castle is not even mentioned, but the perfect town, which was founded by the chancellor of the Polish crown Stanisław Żółkiewski, relies on its most beautiful building – the collegiate church of St. Lawrence. Its architectural grandeur keeps the surrounding in check; the chaos of the poor shtetl does not affect it. The church is about two hundred meters away from the great synagogue, another important landmark. As luck would have it, the narrator and the Lady visit the town during the Jewish holiday of Purim, described in the story as the “Day of Haman,” as if it was the bloodthirsty official of the Persian king from the Book of Esther, later hanged, who triumphed, humiliating his victims. In the streets, one can come across “children's apocalyptic parades,” which remind one more of the infamous children's crusade from the 1210s than of the Jewish holiday. What is the reason behind it? We must look for answers outside “Entropia.”

The first clue may be found in the story “O Stefcu, o Chaimie Immerglücku i o scytyjskich bransoletkach” [About Stefcia, Chaim Immerglück and Scythian bracelets] (1953) published in *Pierścień z papieru*. The narrator, this time undoubtedly made in the image of the author, arrives in Zhovkva in September 1939, shortly before leaving for Hungary with the 10th Armored and Motorized Brigade:

Liczę na palcach, ileż to: dwa? trzy lata, jak tu byłem? Rynek, na rynku ta sama studnia ze statuą Matki Boskiej i z podstawy jej biją dwie szpryce wody ze źródeł na wzgórzach sprowadzanej, i wybrukowany

plac naokoło, i szczeliny pomiędzy kamieniami zawsze wilgotne, i u studni małomiasteczkowy nosiwoda, na pół idiota, z tym samym idiotycznym: „A ga! A ga!” Zamek wystercza ponad akacjowymi drzewami i poza nim wieże kolegiaty i banie cerkwi Bazyliańców. Po drugiej stronie, naprzeciw, sklep tytoniowy rozbity i szkło okienne szczyrbi się i lśni na chodniku, i puste tekturowe pudełka po papierosach wszędzie porozrzucane

[I count the number of years since my last visit on the fingers of my hand. How long has it been? Two years? Three years? The market square, in the market square, the same well with the statue of the Virgin Mary; it dispenses two streams of water from the spring in the hills. The paved square around it, and the cracks between the stones which are always wet, and at the well there is a small-town water carrier, an imbecile, who keeps repeating: “Oh, ga! Oh, ga!” The castle protrudes from the acacia trees and beyond it one can see the towers of the collegiate church and the domes of the Basilian church. Across the street, there is a tobacconist shop with a smashed window, and the glass is gleaming on the pavement and empty cardboard cigarette boxes are scattered everywhere] (BD 233).

The description of the market square in Zhovkva is more detailed: in front of the entrance to the castle, there is a well with a small fountain and a statue of the Virgin Mary (it has recently returned to the market square after a long break), the texture of the cobblestones is also described, and apart from the collegiate church, the Orthodox Basilian church next to it is also mentioned. That is correct. On the other side of the market square, there are empty spaces where three tenement houses once stood. Perhaps one of them housed the aforementioned tobacco shop, which was not renovated. Meanwhile, the narrator continues:

Na drugim końcu rynku spotkałem Chaima Immerglücka – pamiętam go z dawnych czasów, miał sklep z żelazem i farbami, i narzędziami, sznurami i łańcuchami – i poznał mnie od razu, chociaż to dobrych parę lat, jak tu byłem. Poznał mnie z jakimś błyskiem porozumienia w oczach. To porozumienie akceptujące mnie, zjawiającego się z tą wojną, w pewnej mierze wojnę tę tu ze sobą przywozłem, byłem jednym z jej współtwórców, jej bogów. [...] Może błysk porozumienia w oczach Chaima Immerglücka to złudzenie, a może ma ono skonstrastować, powiedzieć, że nic już nie jest ważne. Że ludzie, jakich widzę na rynku: zbieranina tępych twarzy, oddech ich zmieszany z powietrzem – a żebyśmy byli nawet zwiastunem złych czy dobrych nowin, to nie ma dla nich apelu. Są bezosobowi jak chrobot, szurgot szczurów za ścianą domu, bezosobowy i martwy chlupot wody rozbijającej się o kamienie potoku, skrzyp gałęzi giętych porywem wiatru

[At the other end of the market square I met Chaim Immerglück – I remember him from the old days, he had a hardware shop – and he recognized me at once, although it's been a good few years since I was here. He recognized me with a kind of understanding in his eyes. This understanding accepts me, as I arrive with this war – to some extent I brought this war with me, I was one of its co-creators, its gods. [...] Perhaps the understanding in Chaim Immerglück's eyes is an illusion, or perhaps it is meant to provide a contrast – to say that nothing is important anymore. That the people I see in the market square: a collection of dull faces, their breaths mixed with air – and even if I am a harbinger of bad or good news, they do not care. They are impersonal like squeaking and chirping rats behind the wall of a house, impersonal and lifeless like water crashing against the stones in a stream, like branches bent by a gust of wind] (BD 233–234).

Shortly before the outbreak of WW2, 11,100 people lived in Zhovkva, 38% of whom (or just over 4,000) were Jews. Walking around the town, Haupt happened to come across a Jew he

knew. He even remembers his name. In the next paragraph, the narrator observes: “Tych trochę ludzi to tak jak muchy na twarzy osoby umarłej” [They are like flies on the face of a dead person]. In fact, Zhovkva is no more, and the living sign of its residual existence, imminent annihilation, is Chaim Immerglück, neither a Pole nor a Ukrainian. This, in turn, points to a completely different text written in a bunker in the years 1942-1944, namely the diary of Clara Kramer, a resident of Zhovkva, who survived the Holocaust together with 73 other Jewish people. One day in 1942, Clara Kramer, née Schwarz, wrote:

Our city was in desperate mourning. Carriages loaded with dead bodies were taken to the cemetery. Everyone was in shock as they described family members who had been killed while trying to run. Or else they had been shot trying to get up when they were told to kneel in the center of the town. Or they had been shot while jumping off the trains. Or else they had been shot when betrayed by the Poles whom they had begged to hide them. Aunt Rela lost her mother, brother, and sister-in-law. Mr Patrontasch lost his youngest sister Pepka (the girl Josek had flirted with before marrying Rela) and her child. She had been running to the house of a Polish friend who had promised to hide her, but the friend didn't let her in when she got there. Papa's friend, Mr Taube, saw her lying in a puddle of blood. They went for her body but couldn't find her again.<sup>4</sup>

We again find ourselves in the same market square in Zhovkva, where Haman, so enigmatically mentioned in “Entropia,” triumphs, but at the same time the distance between that market square, neglected and transfixed, and the Holocaust is huge. Between them lies the market square where the narrator-lieutenant Haupt found Chaim Immerglück. Nothing had happened then, but everything was clear. Not people but rats may be found in the streets. Flies gather as if waiting for corpses, and instead of a chorus of voices, we hear “impersonal and lifeless (...) water crashing against the stones in a stream.” As such, Haupt's story reads like an apocalyptic story – it seems to foreshadow the (then unimaginable) Shoah. Of course, in 1953 everyone knew what had happened but the *u n i m a g i n a b l e* is not explicitly mentioned in the story. The story ends, somewhat out of the blue, with a description of a Scythian burial mound and a princess in a “diadem of gold plates,” with gold bracelets on her wrists, who was buried there. Let there be no doubt that this story is about death.

Naturally, Haupt's most important story about Zhovkva is “Lutnia” [The Lute], published posthumously in the collection *Szpica* [Vanguard] (1989). It is undoubtedly one of Haupt's greatest literary achievements. Andrzej Niewiadomski analyzed the story insightfully, enumerating all the graves that can be found in it, i.e., tombstones in the Zhovkva cemetery, the sealed room of Lieutenant Sterba, whom love pushed to commit suicide, the crypt in the collegiate church full of rotten coffins and, once again, the burial mound of the Scythian princess.<sup>5</sup> Niewiadomski also examined the structure the story, which was based on the sequence “Moscow-Zhovkva-death-Moscow-Zhovkva-Moscow-Zhovkva-death.”<sup>6</sup> Instead of Zhovkva, the reader at the beginning visits Moscow. The city is occupied by the Tatars, who are reduced much later to waiters accepting tips in Moscow restaurants. Then the reader is

<sup>4</sup> Clara Kramer, *Clara's War: One Girl's Story of Survival* (New York: HarperCollins, 2009), 58-59.

<sup>5</sup> Andrzej Niewiadomski, “Jeden jest zawsze ostrzem”. *Inna nowoczesność Zygmunta Haupta* [“One is always the blade.” Zygmunta Haupt's other modernity] (Lublin: Wydawnictwo UMCS, 2015), 67.

<sup>6</sup> Niewiadomski, 41.

transferred to Zhovkva and then to Klushino in the interwar period, from where he returns to Zhovkva for a short while to look at the standard post of the Sixth Regiment of Mounted Riflemen “marked by death.” Then he goes back to Moscow, this time occupied by the Poles, one of whom is punished severely for desecrating the icon of the Mother of God. Then, the reader goes back to the ideal town of Zhovkva, where he learns about the Italian architect who built the synagogue, Battista di Quadro di Lugano, a genius conservator of historical Galician buildings in the interwar period, Antoni Łobos, Mounted Riflemen who died a violent death, and the owner of the Plitna estate, Mr. Żarczewski, whose family name was Witz. Then, we go back to Moscow and witness Żółkiewski leaving the city. Finally, we visit Zhovkva a few days before its annihilation, that is before September 17, 1939.

First, the narrator, overcome with the feeling of the uncanny, notices a destroyed Luxtorpeda – a famous diesel railcar which run between Lviv and Zakopane, Boryslav, Kolomyia and Ternopil. (In reality, however, this was impossible, because four out of six railcars of this type were destroyed elsewhere, and the other two were not damaged). The railcar is turned upside down which represents the failure of modernity (the flagship railcar of the Second Republic of Poland is a “symbol of defeat”) and the failure of dreams about progress and modernization. Haupt’s battery was stationed near the castle, so he could – as it turned out for the last time – visit the seat of the victorious king. Before the war, one of the wings housed the magistrate’s office and the municipal archive, where for almost three hundred and fifty years the history of Zhovkva had been documented: “tomiska, foliały, szpargały, pracowicie pozszywane kopiariusze, teki, z których wysypuje się zawartość” [volumes, folios, scraps, painstakingly stitched copybooks, portfolios from which documents spilled out] (BD 459). The order of the archive, maintained by officials for centuries, gave way to disorder: “pod sklepieniami, na półkach góry papierzysków: akta, stosy książ, foliałów, fascykułów dzienników podawczych” [under the vaults, on the shelves, there are heaps of papers: files, piles of books, folios, fascicles, journals] (BD 458). In this chaos, we find a lute: “wdzięczna jej szyja, gryf i cudowne ciało, sklezione kiedyś z cieniotkich wiórów, drzazg, deszczułek, podbiega do spodu i zbiega się w uchwycie, czerni się jej wnętrze nabrzmiałem rezonansiem” [its grateful neck, bridge, and wonderful body, once glued together from thin chips, splinters, boards, bends and fits perfectly in one’s hand, its insides turn black, pregnant with resonance] (BD 461). According to the narrator, the beautiful old instrument resonates well with books, especially those written by poets, including the quoted Mikołaj Sęp Szarzyński. Alas, the narrator gets carried away but for a moment:

Wdzięczy się ta lutnia, ale brakło młodej ręki, by z niej głos wydobyć. Śliczne drzewo, dźwięczne struny, ale jest w nim martwota, jakby nie była to lutnia, ale trumna, trumienka, pusta kołyska. Brał ją kiedyś ktoś w ręce i wykołysywał słowa, i słowa przebrzmiały, i wargi zniechęcone zwiędły. Tak jak to miasto kiedyś rozbrzmiewające głosami, echem młodych kroków, szumem liści i zgrzytem kry lodowej po wodzie; a dzisiaj po nim pozostał tylko pusty grób – *kenotaph*

[This lute was so graceful but a young hand that could make it sing was no more. Beautiful wood, wonderful strings, but there is a deadness in it, as if it were not a lute, but a coffin, a little coffin, an empty cradle. Someone once took it in their arms and rocked it, making it produce words, and the words faded away, and the discouraged lips withered.

Just like this town that once resounded with voices, the echo of young steps, the rustle of leaves, and the sound of ice breaking in the stream; and today only an empty grave remains – a *cenotaph*] (BD 461).



The lute is an equivalent, a metaphor for Zhovkva. The town has been transformed into its empty tomb, in which the people, still alive, are only shadows of the former residents. Haupt, who wrote the story *post factum*, more than twenty years after WW2, once again seems to predict the future. He both announces and anticipates the end of Zhovkva – the fall of the town founded by the chancellor of the Polish crown. The victims of the Holocaust in the literal sense were, almost without exception, Jews, but the world of Poles and Ukrainians was also destroyed. They were expelled from the town and deprived of the right to decide about the future of their country. Most historic buildings of Zhovkva have survived: the collegiate church, the Basilian church, the wooden church of St. Trinity from the beginning of the 17th century, the former Dominican church. Although the Nazis destroyed the interior of the synagogue, its walls are still standing, and the roof has been restored. The ruined castle is awaiting another renovation. However, its *genius loci* has either completely disappeared or is but a shadow of its former self.

“Lutnia” ends with, as Niewiadomski writes, death. After WW2, in 1951, even the name Zhovkva was erased from the map. The town was renamed Nesterov. Quoting *Wielka Encyklopedia Sowiecka* [The Great Soviet Encyclopedia], Haupt informs us that this was the name of a great “pilot of Tsarist Russia” who was shot down by an enemy airplane near Zhovkva in the early days of WW1, in August 1914 (BD 462). This raises a question to which there is no clear answer: why did the Soviet rulers of the Ukrainian Socialist Republic chose a pilot from the pre-revolutionary era as the patron of Stanisław Żółkiewski’s town? Surely, a Soviet hero would have been a better choice. We do not know why. Another mystery is the collegiate church in which we find the epitaph of the occupier of the Kremlin. Why was it not destroyed? This notwithstanding, Nesterov “works” within the internal logic of the story, insofar as the story begins and ends in – tsarist, imperial – Moscow. Thus, the capital of Russia triumphs over Zhovkva: by erasing its name, it symbolically takes revenge for the 17th-century insult. No onomastic trace of the Polish Grand Hetman of the Crown Stefan Żółkiewski remains. The return to the historical name after 1990 was, to some extent, also an act of reviving the memory of the great leader and warrior, who respected the Ruthenians and spoke Ruthenian. Bohdan Khmelnytsky’s father, who died at Cecora, was the commander of the troop which protected Żółkiewski.

Prophetic motifs also appear in two stories from the *Nietota* series; *Nietota* was a girl from a good family who was sent to a boarding school at the Monastery of Benedictine Nuns in Przemyśl. The first story is “*Perekotypołe*.” The Ukrainian title, allegedly borrowed from *Nietota*’s herbarium, refers to a local plant, a tumbleweed. The writer compiles a long list of Galician plants in Polish and in Latin. The Lady explains:

A to? To? To *perekotypołe*. *Perekotypołe*? No tak, ze ślazonowych. *Salsola pestifer*. Tu nie jego miejsce, bo to zielnik roślin leczniczych, ale zabłąkał się. Bo wiesz, błąka się, nie czepia miejsca, toczy się kulą po ziemi, czepia płotów i krzaków, wiatr niesie nim, sam widziałeś, nie? *Perekotypołe*...

[And this? This is *perekotypołe*. *Perekotypołe*? Well, from the Amaranthaceae family. *Salsola pestifer*. It doesn’t belong here, because it’s an herbarium of medicinal plants, but it got lost. Because, you know, it wanders around, it doesn’t stay in one place, it tumbles on the ground, it clings to fences and bushes, the wind carries it, you’ve seen it, haven’t you?] (BD 514).

This tumbleweed could be described as a migrant plant. It is always on the run; it must wander around the plain, the steppe, pushed by the wind in the dry dust. However, it also has a peculiar

intra-textual function, as it “drives” the plot, or rather triggers a change of scenery – activates a set of associations. These include Salomea Wiśniowiecka and her numerous estates in the Kremenets region, Frederick Barbarossa, childhood memories, card games, WW1 and the chaotic times that followed (when Volhynia and Galicia were annexed by different countries), Nitota’s medical studies and her room in the sanatorium, where she ended up perhaps as a result of her mental problems. Intertwined with these associations is the palpable feeling of fear, first inspired by the ghost of the abbess of the Przemyśl monastery, who supposedly haunts the girls at the boarding school. The narrator devotes an entire analytical paragraph to fear:

No bo oczywiście strachy. Jest coś niesamowitego w trwodze, zmorze, drzeniu i dygocie przed sprawami strasznymi, a zarazem czemuś one pociągają i wabią, choć dojmują i wstrząsają, i za tym wstrząsem, dreszczem coś ciągnie porywa, tak jak pociąga nas ostrze opartej o ścianę siekiery, błękitnej zastygłej w grozie stali, albo kiedy nieuniknienie ciągnie urwa, przepaść, obryw skalny, czy przerębł w lodzie, czy toń bezdena wody, czeluść klatki schodowej w wielopiętrowym domu, gzymsowanie na wieży zapraszające do przejścia się pomiędzy niebem i ziemią  
[Well, of course, fear. There is something amazing in fear, nightmares, trembling and shaking at the sight of terrible things, and at the same time they are fascinating and appealing; although we are shocked and moved, we enjoy this feeling, just like we would be attracted to the blue steel blade of an ax leaning against a wall, frozen in fear; a pit, an abyss, a cliff, an ice hole, the bottomless depths of the ocean, the abyss of a staircase in a multi-story house, a tower’s cornice inviting you to walk between heaven and earth – all these things fascinate us] (BD 507–508).

Such reflections give way to the memory of WW1, that is waiting at some junction station for an “escapee train.” It was supposed to take the family (the *Haupts?*) to a safe place that was far away from the front, which was at the time moving dangerously closer to Volhynia. Fiction is suddenly invaded by the real, suggesting for a moment a turn towards autobiography, i.e., a certain continuity which is, however, soon broken. Considering biography in relation to historiography, Karlheinz Stierle writes: “If biography addresses the relationships of all life, and thus the continuum of life, this narrative form is countered by another form, perhaps the best literary equivalents of which are drama and the novel, and which, to draw on Johann Gustav Droysen, can be called ‘catastrophic historiography.’ Catastrophic historiography emphasizes the episodic nature of the superior historical context, making it the object of history.”<sup>7</sup>

Haupt’s Galician stories have either a sporadic or a fundamentally deep connection with historiography, that is with “catastrophic historiography.” As Walter Benjamin argued, this form of historiography puts emphasis on important events that shed light onto a process which can be described and analyzed. The image of the evacuation, which probably took place in the late summer or early autumn of 1914, is vividly imprinted in the narrator’s memory. More importantly, however, it can transport the reader to a rather distant future, about which Haupt knew at the time of writing the story not because he had witnessed it but because he had read about it in books and survivors’ testimonies:

<sup>7</sup> Karlheinz Stierle, “Erfahrung und narrative Form Bemerkungen zu ihrem Zusammenhang in Fiktion und Historiographie”, in: *Text als Handlung: Grundlegung einer systematischen Literaturwissenschaft* (Leiden: Brill, 2012) 249.

Przed nami czeluść towarowego wagonu. Odsunięte na rolkach ciężkie drzwi, brudnocegłana wypełzła od słońca i pluch barwa desek oszalowujących ściany, szczeliny wąskich okienek, znaczone białą farbą hieroglify metryki wagonowej, cyfry, zrudziałe żelazo okuć, sztab, śrub. Przed tłoczącą się ciżbą ludzką rozdziawiona straszliwa paszczyka drzwi wagonu towarowego. W lata potem miał wyglądać tak samo, tyle że szczeliny okienek oplatał drut kolczasty, a za siatką ramki despeczerskiej widnieją kartki ceduł frachtowych i destynacji dla tych, co na torach rozrządowych zestawiają eszelony, [kartki] pedantycznie informujące o miejscach przeznaczenia: Birkenau, Bełżec, Sobibór, Theresienstadt, Dalstroj, Wostok, Gułag...

[The depths of a freight car open before us. Heavy doors on rollers are pushed aside, sunwashed boards the color of dirty bricks cover the walls, the narrow windows barely let any light in, the train number is written illegibly in white paint. Numbers, rusty iron fittings, bars, screws. In front of a throng of people, the terrible jaws of a freight car door open wide. Years later, it was supposed to look the same, except that the windows were covered with barbed wire, and in the dispatch window there were freight bills and destinations for those who controlled the rails, [sheets of paper] pedantically informing about destinations: Birkenau, Bełżec, Sobibór, Theresien-stadt, Dalstroj, Vostok, Gulag] (BD 509).

The image of things to come, connected with the railway, combines both totalitarianisms and both mass exterminations, be it of the “inferior race” or the “enemies of the people and of the Soviet Union.” People who are transported to extermination camps and gulags are treated like cargo, like things that are already dead. They are registered in official documents and given numbers. A horrific and much more vivid vision of a train transporting people presumably to the Nazi German extermination camp in Belzec, where most Jews from Galicia, including Lviv, were sent to, also appears in the story “El Pelele” which was written at the same time as “Perekotypołe.”

I oto nagle wydaje mi się, że wagon jest w ruchu. Najwyraźniej słyszę stuk jego obręczy kół na spojeniach szyn, przez szczeliny w deskach widzę migające drzewa, na krzywiźnie toru podłoga wagonu chyli się i chwieje i daleko, daleko, gdzieś na początku wielkiego zestawu wagonów pociągu wyje lokomotywa, i głos jej miesza się z wyciem, rykiem tłumu, pochlipywaniem dzieci, bezsilnym tępym łomotem pięści ludzkich tłukących w deski oszalowania wagonów, i straszny chóralny krzyk: „Gewaaalt!” zwierzęcy, bezsilny strachu i rozpaczy ludzkiej ludzi stojących po kostki w gruzowisku wapna, jakim podłogi wagonów wysypano precyzyjnie dla dezynfekcji. A potem już, po wyładowaniu ciżby ludzkiej, wagony już puste i lekkie, w stukocie, w metalicznym stuku zderzaków przebiegającym jak dreszcz zestawami eszelonów rozrządzanych, przestawianych i szepianych na torach, dobrze wydezynfekowane wagony odchodzą po nowy i nowy ładunek ludzki

[And suddenly it seems to me that the freight car is moving. I can hear the metal wheels moving on the metal rails; through the gaps in the boards, I catch the glimpses of trees. As the rail turns, the floor of the car tilts and wobbles and far, far away, somewhere at the head of the train the locomotive wails, and its wailing mixes with the howling and the roar of the people, the sobbing of the children, the helpless, dull sound of the human fists pounding on the wooden walls, and the terrible, animal, powerless, and fearful scream “Gewaaalt!” let out by people who are standing ankle-deep in quicklime, a disinfectant, with which the floors of the cars were covered. And then, once the people are unloaded, the cars are empty and light. They bump and move, metal against metal. They are rearranged and coupled on the tracks. And then thoroughly disinfected cars leave for new human cargo] (BD 522).

Again, Clara Kramer, in an entry probably made in late autumn of 1942, before she and her family were hidden by the Becks family, confirms Haupt's vision. At that time, she was still in contact with other Jewish residents of Zhovkva and knew about the horrors of the deportation:

There is terror and panic in our city. The Jews are building bunkers of all kinds: underground, double walls, anywhere they can find a spot to hide. Others are looking for help from the gentiles. Others are crying in despair about the loss of their loved ones... There are rumors they are being poisoned with gas. Others say they are being electrocuted, burned or shot with guns. One thing is for sure, there is no return from there. (...) Nobody knew where the train was headed. Somebody, I don't know who, hired some peasants to follow the train. They reported back a few days later, telling us that the train had stopped near Belzec, where the Nazis had built a camp in the deep woods. They said they couldn't get near the camp because there were too many soldiers. Although they were still kilometres away, they said they could smell the stench of burning bodies.<sup>8</sup>

The horror of the Holocaust left a mark on Haupt's prose. Still, Haupt does not only write about the Jews but also about other Galician nations. He described them in the story "To sam jestem Emmą Bovary" [I Am Emma Bovary] (1969). The Jews are characterized first:

Nazywali się: Ajzyk, Aszkenazy, Mordka, Szmul, Judka, Symche, Kimmel, Brajtszwancowa, Sobel, Grünbaum, Tennenbaum, Eck, Wassermann, Glück, Bickels, Szlome, Icyk, Mejir, Mendel, Mendelson, Zwiebel, Brillant, Jojne, Cukier, dzieci ich nazywały się piesszczotliwie: Sara, Sarusia, Jankiel, Mojsze, Izio [...], z całego żydowskiego folkloru małopolskiego dochodziło nas: 'pod chajrem', 'chazoka', 'cheder', 'makagiga', 'puryc', 'majufes', 'myszygene', 'mazel tow', 'szabes goj', 'Hamanowe ucho', na drzwiach niskich domów były skośnie przybite w blaszanej oprawie 'przykazania' [...]

[Their names were: Ajzyk, Aszkenazy, Mordka, Szmul, Judka, Symche, Kimmel, Brajtszwancowa, Sobel, Grünbaum, Tennenbaum, Eck, Wassermann, Glück, Bickels, Szlome, Icyk, Mejir, Mendel, Mendelson, Zwiebel, Brillant, Jojne, Cukier. Their children's names were: Sara, Sarusia, Jankiel, Mojsze, Izio [...]; this small-town vibrant Jewish community had its own language; the words we knew were: 'pod chajrem', 'chazoka', 'cheder', 'makagiga', 'puryc', 'majufes', 'myszygene', 'mazel tow', 'Shabbos goy', 'Haman's ear', 'commandments' in tin frames were nailed to the doors of their tiny houses [...]] (BD 476).

Describing the diverse population of Zhovkva – the three different religions, the three different cultures, and the three different communities living together yet apart – Haupt focuses on the individual, on the personal. First, he lists the names and the surnames of the Jewish residents, in random order. It is important to know their names because almost all of them were murdered in the Holocaust. It is Haupt's own private remembrance roll call ceremony. To repeat after Jean-François Lyotard, it can be said that in this way at least the "honor of the name"<sup>9</sup> of

<sup>8</sup> Kramer, 40, 48.

<sup>9</sup> In the final paragraph of his famous essay "Answering the Question: What is Postmodernism?," Lyotard writes: "The nineteenth and twentieth centuries have given us as much terror as we can take. We have paid a high enough price for the nostalgia of the whole and the one, for the reconciliation of the concept and the sensible, of the transparent and the communicable experience. [...] The answer is: Let us wage a war on totality; let us be witnesses to the unrepresentable; let us activate the differences and save the honor of the name." "Answering the Question: What is Postmodernism?," in: *Philosophers on Art From Kant to the Postmodernists: A Critical Reader*, ed. Christopher Want, trans. Régis Durand (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 248–249. The words "whole" and "unrepresentable" take on unexpected meaning in Haupt's prose.

the victims of mass executions and gas chambers is saved. Hebrew words and phrases which a gentile picked up are like visitation stones placed on graves which cannot be found in the Zhovkva cemetery.

Then, Haupt writes about Ukrainians, or Ruthenians. They were usually poor people who lived in the villages around Zhovkva and visited the town in search of medical help or to buy industrial goods. Their language also resonates in the writer's memory:

Wieś podchodziła pod miasteczko i tu nazywali się: Hrycaj, Kołcan, Onufrej, Kłym, Hilko, Wołodyszyn, Wasyl, Petro, Matwij, Czmoła, Pajuk, Kłymowycz, Zazula, Krywyj, Ostafij, czyli Eustachy, Panas, czyli Atanazy, Kołymyszyn, Stup, Werbowyj, Bajan, Mykoła, Naum, Palij, Maksym, [...] Kowalczuk, Borowij, Jewka [...] Mówią: 'Onufreju, tela zariż... Poobidały taj pizły w pole żaty... Widczyny dweri...', chwałą Boga: 'Sława Isusu Chrystu... Nawiky-wikiw... Maty Preczystaja...', wspominają: 'Ne tak buło za cisara... Buwało, horiwka za try krej Cary i miszok jaczmieniu za piwtora rynskocho... Pojichały na prażnyk na Światoju Pokrowu...' [...]

[The village came close to the town and they were called: Hrycaj, Kołcan, Onofrey, Kłym, Hilko, Wołodyszyn, Wasyl, Petro, Matwij, Chmoła, Pajuk, Klymowycz, Zazula, Kryvyj, Ostafij, i.e. Eustace, Panas, i.e. Athanasius, Kolymyszyn, Stup, Werbowyj, Bajan, Mykoła, Naum, Palij, Maksym, [...] Kowalczuk, Borowij, Jewka [...] They say things like: 'Onufreju, tela zariż... Poobidały taj pizły w pole żaty... Widczyny dweri...', they praise God: 'Sława Isusu Chrystu... Nawiky-wikiw... Maty Preczystaja...', they remember: *Ne tak buło za cisara... Buwało, horiwka za try krej Cary i miszok jaczmieniu za piwtora rynskocho... Pojichały na prażnyk na Światoju Pokrowu...* [...]] (BD 477–478).

Haupt rarely writes about Ukrainians. They are sometimes portrayed unbiasedly, and sometimes as enemies of the Poles. Although even they can recall with nostalgia their service in the Polish army under the command of a captain who treated his subordinates humanely, and even happened to be "i ojcem i matką w jednej osobie dla swoich konnych strzelców" [a father and mother in one person to his mounted riflemen] (BD 455). A fierce nationalist and a survivor of the Ukrainian People's Republic met in Paris at the end of a heated discussion asks for "siedemdziesiąt centymów na metro" [seventy centimes for the metro] (BD 214), which he receives because he is, after all, a compatriot, despite the fact that he threatened to kill Polish people who live in Western Ukraine. Sometimes, as in "Poker w Gorganach" [Poker in the Gorgany], the narrator finds a telling trace of Ukrainian presence – a Cyrillic inscription in a cable car which reads "Proklatyje Lachy..." (BD 242). On the one hand, the writer does not ignore the ethnic conflict, but, on the other hand, "Ruthenians" are part and parcel of the social landscape for him. They are present in his stories, if only because of their language.

The third ethnic group in Zhovkva, found at the top of the social ladder, is, as one might expect, ethnically Polish. Poles are craftsmen, small entrepreneurs, shopkeepers, judges, police officers, doctors, pharmacists, lawyers, civil servants, military men, and priests. They are all "gentlemen" and "ladies:"

A przedmieście to pan Lenartowicz (zakład ślusarski), pan Domerecki, pan Sadłowski (betoniarnia i studnie artezyjskie), pan Kwaszczyszyn [zapewne spolszczony Rusin – M.W.], pan Turczaniewicz (sklep kolonialny i pokój do śniadań [...]), pan Nowaczek, pan Wysocki, pan Kozorys, pan Smalaski

(plenipotent folwarku radziwiłłowskiego [...]), pan Gwóźdź, Hawrysz, Machan, Motowidło, Salewicz, Zuber, Sadowski, Wantuła, pan Roszlakowski i pan Pierdział (legionista-inwalida – miał ki-osk koło izby skarbowej: papierosy i gazety [...]) Tytułowali się: sędzia Baryński, radca Kudlicki, radca Steinberger, aplikant Słomka, dependent adwokacki Szmurło, pan mecenas Czesny, dyrektor Ferdynand Ślepowron-Wierzbicki, komendant Wołoszyn, naczelnik Braun i doktor Owocowicz, i sekretarz Aleksander Bułka, kontroler Bazyle Skowroda, doktor Pfau, doktor Gegenwarten, profesor Konstanty Leliwa-Podhajski, inspektor Weltschmertz, magister Podsoński [...], ksiądz dziekan Paweł Suchecki i ksiądz katecheta Browniak, kapitan Trznadel, podkomisarz Wijun, doktor Umański i doktor Eisennagel [...] [And in the suburbs live Mr. Lenartowicz (locksmith), Mr. Domerecki, Mr. Sadłowski (concrete plant and artesian wells), Mr. Kwasczyczsyn [probably a Polonized Ruthenian – M.W.], Mr. Turczaniewicz (colonial shop and breakfast room [...]), Mr. Nowaczek, Mr. Wysocki, Mr. Kozorys, Mr. Smalaski (plenipotentiary of the Radziwiłł estate [...]), Mr. Gwóźdź, Hawrysz, Machan, Motowidło, Salewicz, Zuber, Sadowski, Wantuła, Mr. Roszlakowski and Mr. Pierdział [a former soldier and an invalid – he sold cigarettes and newspapers next to the tax office] [...] Their titles were: Judge Baryński, Counselor Kudlicki, Counselor Steinberger, Trainee Attorney Słomka, Lawyer's Assistant Szmurło, Attorney Czesny, Director Ferdynand Ślepowron-Wierzbicki, Commandant Wołoszyn, Chief Braun and Doctor Owocowicz, and Secretary Aleksander Bułka, Inspector Bazyle Skowroda, Doctor Pfau, Doctor Gegenwarten, Professor Konstanty Leliwa-Podhajski, Inspector Weltschmertz, Mr. Podsonski [...], Fr. Dean Paweł Suchecki and Fr. Browniak, Captain Trznadel, Deputy commissioner Wijun, Doctor Umański and Doctor Eisenagel [...]] (BD 479–480).

Most surnames are “typically” Polish surnames. Only a few doctors, one councilor, one commandant, and one inspector are ethnic Jews or Ukrainians whose social status changed because of education, religious conversion, or other circumstances. It is clear, however, that it is the Poles who are the small-town elite: they hold official positions, observe the law, heal, and promote the Roman Catholic religion. Their language corresponds to their professions, education, possessions, aspirations, and circumstances:

Mówią: ‘grzech’, ‘przylepka’, ‘oścież’, ‘brytfanna’, ‘kataster’, ‘onyks’, mówią: ‘kolastra’, ‘krzywa Queteleta’, ‘płonica’, ‘okrężne’, mówią: ‘a szlag by to trafił’, ‘sen kataleptyczny’, mówią: ‘ni w pięć, ni w dziewięć’, mówią: ‘cud’, ‘zalecać i ‘przedrzeźniać’, mówią: ‘na ukos’, ‘wzdęcie’, ‘szablon’, ‘anachronizm’, ‘baju, baju’, ‘orli nos’. Mówią, mówią – słowa, słowa [They say ‘sin,’ ‘sticky,’ ‘ajar,’ ‘casserole,’ ‘registry,’ ‘onyx,’ they say ‘sulfur,’ ‘Quetelet curve,’ ‘scarlet fever,’ ‘circular,’ they say ‘damn it,’ ‘catalepsy,’ they say ‘neither this nor that,’ they say ‘miracle,’ ‘recommend’ and ‘mimic,’ they say ‘diagonally,’ ‘flatulence,’ ‘template,’ ‘anachronism,’ ‘old wives’ tale,’ ‘aquiline nose.’ They say, they say – words, words] (BD 480).

This triple portrait made of words and enumerations, which reminds one of Bakhtin’s reflections on Dostoyevsky’s poetics (the sociology of language in literature), shows a social hierarchy which Haupt, as a Pole, both acknowledged and at the same time ironically distanced himself from. (“Words, words” is, after all, a paraphrased quote from *Hamlet*; the power of words is questioned). All the different names, occupations, ranks, titles, and positions, combined with the words used by a given ethnic group (which are both representative and random), create a living world of the city of Zhovkva, causing an illusory, as it turned out, impression of continuity and resistance. “Perekotypołe” dispels this illusion. Before the war, Nietota took the narrator to a dissecting room, where she showed him the corpse of an old woman: “wymoczone w formalinie ciało

koloru mahoni z wydatnym nawet u staruszki wzgórkciem Wenerzy” [body the color of mahogany soaked in formalin, with the mound of Venus which was prominent even in the old woman] (BD 514). Much later, this memory took on a different meaning as a result of historical events:

I znowu po latach przyszło to nawrotem, kiedy na świadectwo czasom pogardy ukazano nam setki, tysiące fotografii stosów ludzkich trupów w obozach śmierci czy u rozkopanych dołów masowych egzekucji. Wyschłe i kanciaste od kości obciążniętych skórą, straszliwy teatr lalek, manekinów, żebra, piszczele, miednice, wyszczerzone zęby i golone czaszki, spiczaste kolana i stawy łokciowe, skóra napięta na kościach policzkowych, wpadłe w oczodoły, zagasłe oczy – i w tym ciała kobiece bezwstydne w ich nagości, ukazujące właśnie ów sterczący wzgórek Wenerzy. Widoki jakby z obrazu jakiegoś mistrza z quattrocenta, góry zwłok jakby w ruchu, jakby podnoszących się z ziemi, powstających z martwych, by pójść tłumem, zdążyć długim wijącym się węzłem ku dolinie sądu ostatecznego [And again, years later, it came back to me when, as a testimony to the times of contempt, we were shown hundreds, thousands of photographs of piles of human bodies in extermination camps and mass graves. Dry and angular, with skin-covered bones, a terrible theater of puppets, mannequins, ribs, shinbones, pelvises, bared teeth and shaved skulls, pointed knees and elbow joints, skin tightly pulled over the cheekbones, the extinguished eyes deep in the eye sockets; and female bodies, shamelessly naked, were there as well, and I could see the mound of Venus. Images as if from a painting by some Quattrocento master, piles of corpses as if in motion, as if rising from the ground, rising from the dead to follow the crowd, to travel down the long winding road towards the valley of the last judgment] (BD 514–515).

The reference to “some quattrocento master” reminds one of, for example, Hans Memling and his triptych *The Last Judgment* (now in the National Museum in Gdańsk), painted at the turn of the 1460s and 1470s. Resurrection is shown in the central panel, as the archangel Michael weighs the bodies and the souls of men. The saved go to the right (from his perspective), that is to heaven, and the damned go to the left, that is to hell. Grotesque devils torture the damned in various ways. As in *The Divine Comedy*, Memling’s hell is “busier” than the queue to the gates of heaven, where St. Peter, taking his time, greets the saved. There are a lot of bodies in this painting – happy, unhappy, anxious about their destiny – but they are all complete, untouched bodies. Haupt’s bodies are different.

Haupt’s bodies remind one of the photographs taken by the US Army after the liberation of the Buchenwald Nazi concentration camp in April 1945. The writer could have seen the photographs because they were reproduced in different newsreels and the press – they were iconic testimonies of Nazi bestiality. Over time, more and more such photographs appeared – as it turned out, many of them were taken by the members of the Einsatzgruppen who executed Jews on a mass scale on the Polish lands which since September 17, 1939, were occupied by the USSR. The vast majority of the victims belonged to the first of the ethnoreligious groups described in “To ja jestem Emmą Bovary.” Still, the corpses, which were so terrifyingly and vividly described in the story, have no nationality. It can be assumed that at least some of them were Ukrainians and Poles killed by the Germans or by the NKVD or sent to gulags or forced to move to Kazakhstan or Siberia. The image of the dead bodies painted by Haupt is thus a collective epitaph of the once living and breathing Zhovkva – a world that disappeared almost without a trace forever.

Almost, because some traces were committed to memory by the narrator of “O Stefci, o Chaimie Immerglücku i o scytyjskich bransoletkach,” “Lutnia,” and “El Pelele:”

Myśmy tam żyli, współżyli z ludźmi, którzy podobnie, ale inaczej mówili, inaczej żyli, pazurami z tej ziemi wydzielali sobie byt, kochali, umierali... Mówili podobnie, ale inaczej: z przydechem, *aspiré*, od nich przychodziło wiele do nas, do lwowszczyzny, do tej szlacheckiej, mieszczańskiej, inteligenckiej polszczyzny, przydając jej prowincjonalizmy, prowincjonalny rozpoznawczy akcent. I owszem, dumki, zaśpiewy ruskie, bo mówiło się u nas ‘ruski’, ‘Rusini’, mówiło się: ‘grecko-katolicki’, a nie jak Kongresowiaczy, co to mówili: ‘rusiński’, ‘unicki’

[We lived there, we lived there together with the people who spoke a similar yet different language; they lived differently, they worked hard to make ends meet, they loved, they died... They spoke a similar yet different language: they breathed heavily, with *aspiré*, we borrowed a lot of words from them, they found their way into the Lviv dialect, into this noble, bourgeois, intellectual Polish dialect, bringing regionalisms, and a kind of a provincial twang. And yes, dumkas, Russian songs, because we used to say ‘Ruski’ or ‘Ruthenians’, we used to say ‘Greek Catholic’, and the rest of Poland used to say ‘Russian’, ‘Uniate’] (BD 526).

The narrator focuses, on the one hand, on the relations between the Galician villagers, who were mostly “Ruthenian”, and the people who lived in towns and cities, who were mostly Polish. He also describes, in general terms, the relations between Poles and Ukrainians. Jews are not mentioned, probably because the Jewish-Polish or the Jewish-Ukrainian language exchange and *vice versa* took place on a much smaller scale. To this day, in the Galician dialect of Ukrainian we find a lot of borrowings from the Polish language, which people from other parts of Ukraine do not understand. The Galician dialect of Ukrainian is still popular in Lviv, where borrowings from the Polish language are “natural” (e.g., filiżanka [cup], fotel [armchair], kalafior [cauliflower], kieliszek [glass], kredens [sideboard], marynarka [jacket], parter [ground floor], rower [bicycle]). There are not as many borrowings from the Ukrainian language in Polish, partly due to the fact that few Poles used to live in the former south-eastern voivodeships. They are still present, along with pronunciation patterns, only in the linguistic memory of the people who were born and raised in Galicia before WW2.

The story “Fragmenty” is particularly personal and clearly autobiographical. Apart from other towns, Haupt mentions “Ułaszkwocze, gdzie się urodziłem” [Ulashkivtsi, where I was born] (BD 427) in Podolia and the river Seret. He also comments on the fleeting and fragmentary nature of memories, which fade with time:

Gont na dachu, gont poczerniały na sinoszaro, wyszurane chodnikowe płyty miasta, bańka wydęta z połączanego szkła w mieszczańskim ogródku, zapocony kołnierz marynarki, zapocony na czarno u tragarza przepasanego sznurami, łydki dziewczyny służącej trzepiącej dywan na galeryjce balkonu, suchotniczy kelner w restauracji ścierający nieschludną serwetą plamy z piwa po poprzednim gościu (po poprzednim gościu – po człowieku, po królu stworzenia, po bliźnim – zostały tylko plamy z piwa i połamane wykałaczki w solniczce; jak Boga Kocham, to prawdziwa tragedia zniknięcia!). To to tak więc powraca do nas dawne życie? To tyle zostało z tamtego świata? Tylko tyle?

[Shingles on the roof, shingles turned blue and gray, the town’s worn pavement, a bubble made of gilded glass in a some bourgeois family’s garden, the wet collar of a jacket of a sweating porter, with ropes across his chest, the calves of a servant girl who is cleaning a carpet on a balcony, a consumptive waiter in a restaurant wiping off beer stains with a dirty napkin (beer stains and broken toothpicks in a salt shaker are all that is left from the last patron – a man, a master of creation, a neighbor – only



beer stains and broken toothpicks in a salt shaker; as God is my witness, it's a real tragedy of disappearance!). Is this how our old lives come back to us? Is that all that's left of that world? Is that it?] (BD 429).

I am not sure if the story about the “last patron” is serious. Ultimately, he seems insignificant; we should not think about him. But what if the thinning substance of the narrator is made of beer stains, and the “dirty napkin” held by the sick waiter? What if the narrator has no choice? If this is the case, then forgetting, even if it is unintentional, means that you are complicit in the murder of the people (acquaintances, neighbors, and strangers) of Lviv and Zhovkva, who were either killed during the war or forced to emigrate. After all, the “tragedy of disappearance” may refer to the Holocaust, the deportation of the politically active Ukrainians to Siberia, the expulsion of Poles to the west, and, last but not least, to what involuntarily always happens with human memory. What connects all of them is the merciless transformation of being into non-being, presence into absence, although making a direct comparison between the fates of the Jewish and the non-Jewish residents of Galicia is naturally out of the question.

translated by Małgorzata Olsza

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# KEYWORDS

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**ABSTRACT:**

The article is devoted to the annihilation of the ethnically, religiously, and linguistically diverse population of Galicia and Podolia during WW2 and its metaphorical representation in Zygmunt Haupt's Galician short stories collected in *Baskijski diabeł* [The Basque devil]. Memories are arranged in a palimpsest-like manner in Haupt's short stories, which are often set in Zhovkva, a Galician town with which Haupt had a special bond. The only countermeasure against forgetting this lost world is memory, which unfortunately fades over time. The writer thus relies on fragmentary associations and retroactive imagination.

# PALIMPSEST

memory

death

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# Poetic faith and a willing suspension of disbelief in Zygmunt Haupt's prose

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## A willing suspension of disbelief

In chapter 7 of the monograph *“Jeden jest zawsze ostrzem”. Inna nowoczesność Zygmunta Haupta* [“One is always the blade.” Zygmunt Haupt’s other modernity], Andrzej Niewiadomski writes, as announced in the Introduction, about the writer who “touched upon eschatological, metaphysical, and ontological issues” thus elevating “the enigmatic nature of his works.”<sup>1</sup> This is most clearly visible in the works in which the writer discusses “philosophical and ideological” questions; coincidentally, such works also “contain the most metatextual elements.”<sup>2</sup> Respectively, metatextual elements in Haupt’s prose must be read in the wider context of aesthetic quality, which Haupt explains referring to *Biographia Literaria*: “The writer has the right to expect from the reader a kind of cooperation that Coleridge called ‘a willing suspension of disbelief;’ the reader should be prepared to accept the things invented by the author as true, to suspend his disbelief, to allow him to confidently move into the represented world. Indeed, the reader is able to co-create the story through understatements, through filling in the gaps. It is a great device, and it gives the reader a lot of satisfaction; the reader is able to engage with the work. But you have to leave some space for the reader.”<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Andrzej Niewiadomski, *“Jeden jest zawsze ostrzem”. Inna nowoczesność Zygmunta Haupta* [“One is always the blade.” Zygmunt Haupt’s other modernity] (Lublin: Wydawnictwo UMCS, 2015), 17.

<sup>2</sup> Niewiadomski, 395.

<sup>3</sup> Jerzy Giedroyc, *Zygmunt Haupt, Listy 1947–1975* [Letters 1947–1975], ed. Paweł Panas (Warsaw: Towarzystwo Więzi, 2022), 179.

Indeed, Haupt refers to Coleridge's "suspension of disbelief" in the wider context of poetics – the text must be shaped and structured in such a way as to allow the reader to enter the represented world and accept its rules. We can see that in a letter to Jerzy Giedroyc, and we can see that in the story "Nietota," in which the writer fully expects the reader to voluntarily suspend his disbelief.<sup>4</sup> This is also visible in "Pereketypołe" [Tumbleweed], where remarks about aesthetic satisfaction induced by fear intertwine with reflections that are clearly inspired by Coleridge: "sami ściszymy w sobie niewiarę, byle osiągnąć tę chwilę doprowadzającego do zawrotu głowy strachu i strachu" [we suspend our own disbelief in order to experience that moment of dizzying fear and dread] (BD 508). When the reader "suspends his disbelief," the artist may represent people and events either through excess and exaggeration or through understatement, and the reader is thus allowed to enter the represented world.

"Suspending disbelief," which Haupt mentioned only once in a relatively long text (almost as a digression), should by no means be reduced to the question of communication between the writer and the reader, or even to the question of mimesis in literature, to which Haupt himself alluded, drawing attention to the question of artistic imitation discussed by Aristotle in *Poetics*. Indeed, in *Biographia Literaria* Coleridge discusses "a suspension of disbelief" in a much broader context than just poetics. In Chapter 14, which opens volume 2, Coleridge explains that when he and Wordsworth were writing *Lyrical Ballads*: "The thought suggested itself (to which of us I do not recollect) that a series of poems might be composed of two sorts"<sup>5</sup>: "it was agreed, that my endeavours should be directed to persons and characters supernatural, or at least romantic; yet so as to transfer from our inward nature a human interest and a semblance of truth sufficient to procure for these shadows of imagination that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment, which constitutes poetic faith. Mr. Wordsworth, on the other hand, was to propose to himself as his object, to give the charm of novelty to things of every day, and to excite a feeling analogous to the supernatural, by awakening the mind's attention to the lethargy of custom, and directing it to the loveliness and the wonders of the world before us; an inexhaustible treasure, but for which in consequence of the film of familiarity and selfish solicitude we have eyes, yet see not, ears that hear not, and hearts that neither feel nor understand [cf. Isaiah 6:10]."<sup>6</sup>

We strive for an understanding that would be as complete as possible. The language of poetry should allow one to see, hear, and feel God's works. Coleridge refers here to the famous quote from *The Book of Isaiah*, which is also repeated many times in the New Testament, because it seems to succinctly describe how one should experience the world. We know that this issue was important to him because in the conclusion he wrote "ΘΕΩ ΜΟΝΩ ΔΟΞΑ"<sup>7</sup> (Theôi Monôi Dôxa), that is "Glory to the only God." He thus summarized his discussion about *Lyrical Ballads*. He professes his faith in the (Anglican) Church – even though some things may not be comprehended by reason, they are still reasonable – and, at the same time, he turns his eyes towards the starry "Heaven." Reason has its limits and that is when faith takes over. And faith is like a dark

<sup>4</sup> See: Zygmunt Haupt, "Nietota", in: *Baskijski diabeł. Opowiadania i reportaże* [The Basque Devil: Short stories and reportages], ed. Aleksander Madyda (Wołowiec: Wydawnictwo Czarne, 2016), 504. Further quotations from this edition are marked with the letters BD and the page number.

<sup>5</sup> Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, ed. Adam Roberts (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2014), 207.

<sup>6</sup> Coleridge, 208.

<sup>7</sup> Coleridge, 414.

night with “sparks twinkling in the amazing depth.” Such a vision of faith is for Coleridge a “pure Act of inward Adoration to the great I AM, and to the filial WORD that re-affirmeth it from Eternity to Eternity, whose choral Echo is the Universe.”<sup>8</sup> The emotionality of this final statement is echoed not only in religious but also in epistemological passion. It refers to the words from *The Book of Isaiah*, quoted in the context of “suspending disbelief,” insofar as every writer in the Romantic era and later would ask himself: what do we see, what do we hear, and what do we feel?

*Biographia Literaria* was published in 1817. Thomas Carlyle’s *Sartor Resartus* was published several years later. It was another book important for understanding the intellectual and spiritual climate of the era. Meyer H. Abrams referred to *Sartor Resartus* to describe the complex transformation of the model of the world found in the works of Romantic poets. As the title of his book suggests,<sup>9</sup> he focused on and explored “Natural Supernaturalism.”<sup>10,11</sup> Indeed, Coleridge’s “endeavours [were] directed to persons and characters supernatural,” and Wordsworth was “to excite a feeling analogous to the supernatural.”<sup>12</sup> The focus on the supernatural is thus clear. Abrams’s understanding of Romantic art is similar to that presented by Earl Wasserman more than two decades earlier in *The Subtler Language* – the model of poetry in Romanticism changed from mimetic to “creative;” instead of using ready-made conventions to describe nature, Romantic writers wished to articulate in poetry their own experiences.<sup>13</sup> Abrams analyzes *Lyrical Ballads* precisely in this context. Specifically, he argues that the general tendency in the Romantic era was to “to naturalize the supernatural and to humanize the divine.”<sup>14</sup> Romantic poets wished “[t]o speak humanly from the height or from the depth/ Of human things.”<sup>15</sup> Here, Abrams quotes Wallace Stevens, a 20th-century American poet.<sup>16</sup> Another quote from Stevens is also important for him: “The poem of the mind in the act of finding/ What will suffice.”<sup>17</sup> Abrams recognized that modern poetry wished to reformulate the religious tradition in such a way as to find artistic motivation that “will suffice” without religion. “Finding what will suffice” is to poetically test “natural supernaturalism,” and thus to, as Coleridge put it, “excite a feeling analogous to the supernatural.”

Stevens’s poetics help Abrams capture the long durée of “natural supernaturalism” in literature. In one of his letters, Stevens remarked: “The major poetic idea in the world is and always has been the idea of God. One of the visible movements of the modern imagination is the movement away from the idea of God. The poetry that created the idea of God will either adapt it to our different

<sup>8</sup> Coleridge, 414.

<sup>9</sup> Meyer Howard Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism. Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature* (New York – London: W. W. Norton, 1973).

<sup>10</sup>See also: Polish translations of Thomas Carlyle’s work: *Sartor Resartus. Życie i zdania pana Teufelsdröckha w trzech księgach*, trans. Sygurd Wiśniowski (Warsaw: Nakład i druk S. Lewentala, 1882), 193–201.

<sup>11</sup>See also: Zdzisław Łapiński’s reception of Abrams’s book in: “Dwaj nowocześni: Leśmian i Przyboś” [Two modern poets: Leśmian and Przyboś], *Teksty Drugie* 5-6 (1994): 84.

<sup>12</sup>Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, ed. Adam Roberts (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2014), 207.

<sup>13</sup>See: Earl Wasserman, *The Subtler Language. Critical Readings of Neoclassic and Romantic Poems* (Michigan: Johns Hopkins Press, 1959), 10–11.

<sup>14</sup>Abrams, 68

<sup>15</sup>Abrams, 69. See: Wallace Stevens, “Chocorua to its Neighbor”, in: *The Collected Poems of Wallace Stevens*, ed. John N. Serio, Chris Beyers (New York: Vintage Books, 2015), 316.

<sup>16</sup>See: Abrams.

<sup>17</sup>See: Abrams. See also: Stevens’s “Of Modern Poetry” translated by Czesław Miłosz – Wallace Stevens, “O nowoczesnej poezji”, in: Czesław Miłosz, *Przekłady poetyckie* [Poetic translations], ed. Magdalena Heydel (Kraków: Znak, 2005), 283–284.

intelligence, or create a substitute for it, or make it unnecessary. These alternatives probably mean the same thing (...).<sup>18</sup> Stevens seems to have shared this kind of poetic sensitivity with Romantic poets. Abrams, as an insightful critic of Romanticism,<sup>19</sup> found in Stevens's poetry a continuation of certain Romantic notions. Natural supernaturalism – to which we cling once we “suspend our disbelief” – encourages us to explore spirituality and not to rely on any transcendent authority. Stevens, who was more radical in his critique of the relationship between culture and religion than Coleridge and Wordsworth (both of whom continued to seek inspiration in Christianity), said that “[a]fter one has abandoned a belief in God, poetry is the essence which takes its place as life's redemption.”<sup>20</sup>

Indeed, I discussed the relationship between Coleridge and Abrams, who built a new interpretative model of belief and disbelief in literature on the basis of Wordsworth's poetry, because I wish to argue that Haupt, culturally and artistically, was an ally of Abrams and Stevens. There are many similarities between their lives (Haupt was a few years older than Abrams, and he made his artistic debut at the time when Stevens entered the literary scene), but what is even more important is the fact that Haupt's references to Coleridge transcend the question of poetics. I emphasize the aesthetic affinity between Haupt and Coleridge because I believe that “suspending disbelief,” which was so important for the Polish writer, also constitutes in Haupt's prose *the moment in which the mind awakens from “the lethargy of custom.”* Imagination must accept new creative (and not imitative or conventional) worlds.

## Down a footbridge

In the introductory remarks to chapter 7 of his monograph, Andrzej Niewiadomski argues that the stories “Światy” [Worlds], “Warianty” [Variants], “Zabawa w zielone” [A game of green], and “Szpica” [Vanguard] are “saturated with philosophical and ideological reflection.”<sup>21</sup> Let us take a look at “Warianty” and ask how poetic faith, which results from the willing suspension of disbelief, is expressed in the story.

The story addresses the question of human life and its unique nature – we may come across the same thing many times but the circumstances, and above all we, change; our perception depends on the most subtle external stimuli and emotions. The second part of the story presents a different “variant” of the same event. It shows that things are not always as they seem, as they appear to be, “po wierzchu” [on the surface] (BD 573). Haupt compiled the memories of several days. The last day is a Sunday. The memory is one of taking part in a liturgical rite, probably in a Sunday mass, although, to be honest, the narrator does not “take part” in the mass, as he speaks of “nudzie długiej nabożeństwa” [a long and boring church service] (BD 574). Indeed, when the mass is over, he has this to say:

<sup>18</sup>Wallace Stevens, “To Henry Church, October 15, 1940”, in: *Letters of Wallace Stevens*, ed. Holy Stevens (London: Faber and Faber, 1966), 378.

<sup>19</sup>Abrams explained that he chose to focus on Wordsworth because his *Prospectus* best expressed what he wanted to illustrate. See: Meyer Howard Abrams, “Rationality and Imagination in Cultural History: A Reply to Wayne Booth”, *Critical Inquiry* 2, 3 (1976): 460.

<sup>20</sup>Wallace Stevens, *Opus Posthumous*, ed. Samuel French Morse (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1957), 158.

<sup>21</sup>Niewiadomski, 395.

Po wyjściu z kościoła ma się taki straszny ucisk i próżnię równocześnie serca, jakby wina za to, że brało się porcję wiary jak komunię i świętokradczo, kiedy nie można było wzbudzić w sobie prawdziwej wiary, i stał tęgi barczysty dzień jak klucznik więzienia

[When you leave the church, you at the same time fell that your heart is aching and completely empty, as if you were feeling guilty for taking a piece of faith like communion, sacrilegiously, because you can't truly believe, and a stout, broad-shouldered day stands before you like a jailer] (BD 575).

The manner in which Haupt describes the whole situation is not “superficial.” The prepositional phrase “powiedzmy szczerze, dla uprzedzonych” [let's be honest, for the prejudiced] (BD 573) challenges the belief that the world at large is more picturesque and more interesting than the writer's homeland. This seemingly unimportant remark about how boring and peripheral the lands which the Austrian officers contemptuously and vulgarly called “Arschhöle” was preceded by a much more “metaphysical” sentence: “Wydawałoby się, że tak może wyglądać nicość” [It would seem that nothingness could look like this] (BD 573). The narrator is no longer simply concerned with nostalgic flashbacks. The metaphysical meaning of the story, which avoids superficiality, may be found in the memory of the Sunday mass. It is not simply another declaration of disbelief in literature, another vision of a man who does not find the genuine in the rite, which thus turns out to be “empty” as far as faith is concerned. Haupt evokes this experience because he does not want to give in to disillusionment; he seeks faith, “poetic faith,” elsewhere. It becomes clear at the end of the story:

Bardzo trzeba się odseparować, odkroić, odlepić, odessać od cycka wiadomości, łona rzeczy omówionych i grubych. Myślenie musi być cienkie, filigranowe, kruche kruchością wyciągniętego na gorąco szkła. Trzeba sobie z tym dać radę.

Trzeba oddzielić się od przestrzeni, jak by to nie było trudne i niemożliwe, powiedzieć sobie: tu jest tu, a tam jest tam. Być sobie takim panem, który jest obiektywnym panem. Posegregować sobie, ale nie systematycznie, bo w całej systematyce można zagubić się dla dobra samej systematyki, ale podzielić sobie i powiedzieć, że jest inaczej.

Nie dlatego, że powiedziano nam co ino o względności i porządku rzeczy zależnym od kondycji, instrumentu, jakim mierzę, od tego, gdzie przypadkowo się znalazłem.

Tylko nie być zaraz trąbą jerychońską.

[You must truly separate yourself, cut yourself off, detach yourself, untie yourself from the tit of the news, from the womb of the discussed and important things. Thinking must be thin, intricate, brittle, and fragile like hot glass. You must deal with it.

You must separate yourself from space, however difficult and impossible it may be, you must say to yourself: here is here, and there is there. Be your own objective boss. Order things for yourself, but not systematically, because you can get lost in the whole systematics for the sake of systematics itself; judge for yourself and see for yourself.

Not because we know about the relativity and the order of things which depends on one's individual situation, the instrument one uses to measure it, one's position.

Just don't be a Jericho trumpet] (BD 575)

At the very beginning, we find the word “truly,” which points to the persuasive power of final remarks – even if it is only self-persuasion, a personal investigation into the question which is followed by this desideratum composed of “musts,” “not because,” and “don't be.” Epistemologi-



cal passion is palpable; one should free oneself from, as Haupt puts it in the story, the oppressive prison of disbelief. Having left the church, feeling “empty” and lost, and physically weak on this very hot Sunday afternoon, as well as irritated by the sight of stupid faces, the “dis-believer” asks:

Jak tu uchwycić istotę rzeczy, jak sobie zadać ten worek, którędy pomacać za futrynę drzwi? Z wielkim przecuciem, z naiwnym rozmysłem macam nogą kładkę, kładeczkę prowadzącą na właściwą stronę. Pewnie, że się będę mylił, ale najważniejsza jest w takim wypadku decyzja; jedno, co pozostaje, zdecydować się ostro.

[How can I grasp the essence of things, how can I carry this bag on my shoulders, which way should I go once I step over the threshold? With great intuition, with naive intention, I reach out and try to find a footbridge, a little footbridge, to the right side. Of course, I will make mistakes, but the most important thing in such a case is to make a decision; all that remains is to make a decision, once and for all] (BD 575)

This passage connects the image of the “empty” heart with the call to reject the absolute truths. Desiderata help one confront the “empty” heart, the onslaught of nothingness.

Haupt’s language in “Warianty” is essentially similar to that identified by Abrams in the works of Romantic poets and such “natural supernaturalists” as Stevens. Haupt, Stevens, and Romantic poets all believe that one should awake from the “lethargy of custom” and “untie [oneself] from the tit of the news, from the womb of the discussed and important things,” that is reject conventional and traditional epistemological tools and search for the essence of things oneself. Other images used by Haupt in “Warianty” confirm that he questions any and all “absolute” truths. Let us take a look at the description of the mass: “Nuda długa nabożeństwa, kiedy organy dudnią i złoci się promień słońca wbiegły przez okno, i stacje męki pańskiej, i zacheuszki na ścianach kościelnych, które są twarde i sterczące do góry jak dogmat” [a long and boring church service, the pipe organ is playing loudly and a golden ray of sunshine is falling through the window, stations of the Cross, and the candlesticks on the walls of the church which are rigid and stick up like dogma] (BD 574). Haupt writes that the candlesticks on the walls (they traditionally indicate the places of anointings at the act of consecration) are like dogmas – they are rigid and thus disheartening – which confirms that what is certain and sanctified by tradition is suspicious. The hardness and the rigidity of the candlesticks/dogma are contrasted with hot glass – it is thin, intricate, brittle, and fragile. What in the celebration of mass is dull, boring, thoughtless, and repetitive – not only artificial flowers but also “stupid faces” – is associated with emptiness, hopelessness, entropy, the terrifying abyss of the universe, and nothingness.

This fight against disbelief that takes place during Sunday mass is actually a form of self-defense against the onslaught of nothingness, as confirmed by two other memories which are recalled before the description of the service. The first memory celebrates an abundance of cherries and the ecstatic joy of boys who pick them. Immediately after the description of “Arschhölle,” as if to deny that “tak może wyglądać nicość” [nothingness could look like this], the conjunction “ale” [but] is introduced and cherry trees in the summer are described: “Ale popatrzeć po drzewach, powiedzmy, w lecie, po czereśniach, które stały tegimi gajami Hesperyd – olbrzymie drzewa czereśniowe, olbrzymie jak sekwoje kalifornijskie, pieniające się czarnym albo czerwonym jak minia owocem” [But look at the trees, let’s say, in the summer, look at the cherry trees that are like the lush gardens of the Hesperides – huge cherry trees, huge as California sequoias, abundant with black or

minium-red fruit] (BD 573). The superficial impression of overwhelming nothingness turns out to be false – just look at the trees and admire the ripe cherries. The delight caused by this image increases when cherry pickers are introduced – those boys want to both make some extra money and have fun. The narrator recalls their joyful cries: “do teraz słyszę ich nawoływania do siebie, kiedy olśnieni, otępieni mnogością, ilością tego wspaniałego dobra, zawieszeni pośród zielonych kul drzew nawoływali do siebie słowami: «Massa jagód, massa!»” [today I can still hear them shout – dazzled, stunned by the multitude, by the amount of these wonderful fruits, suspended among the green balls of the trees, they shout: “An abundance of fruit, an abundance!”] (BD 573). This radiant and joyful memory is part of a metaphysical reflection on how to protect oneself from the onslaught of nothingness. We are reminded of it at the end of the “cherry-picking” scene:

Dotąd słyszę to ‘massa’ prawie że aż monotonne jak śpiew i nawoływania wilg, ‘massa’ chłopców ptaków zawieszonych wpośród przestworu głowami w dół (mam na myśli: jak wszystko inne zawieszone głowami w dół – drzewa, domy – w dół niebieskiego przestworu, przepaści strasznej i rozkosznej)  
[Today I can still hear them shout “an abundance” – the cry is monotonous like the singing and the calls of the oriole – “an abundance” of boys hanging upside down among the trees, like birds (I mean: everything else was hanging upside down too – the trees and the houses – as if falling into a blue abyss, an abyss that is both dreadful and delightful)] (BD 573–574).

The memory of “abundance” (the cry is repeated many times in the story) helps us overcome the fear of the abyss. A different point of view – hanging upside down from a tree and looking up into the vast sky – reminds us of the constant presence of the “dreadful abyss.” Thanks to this simple literary trick we realize that the whole world, “everything else,” is also afraid of nothingness; indeed, not only houses and trees can be seen hanging upside down. This unusual point of view reveals a dreadful yet delightful perspective. Haupt seems to suggest that if we look at the world superficially, we may give in to fear, while a careful look at the details reveals a “delightful” image of reality.

The overwhelming feeling of emptiness and nothingness also affects characters in a “harvest scene” set in acid-soil meadows. On a rainy and cloudy day, two boys hide from the rain under a cart. They observe the world from this perspective and feel the onslaught of nothingness:

było najstraszliwiej pusto i beznadziejnie: nic, tylko brudna zieleń traw, woda i wilgoć, ciurki deszczu spływające po wszystkim, i deszcz niesiony pochyło i zapylający i zawiewający świat do najbeznadziejniejszej pustki, i zgrzyt brzękliwy kos po trawach, i kamień osełki toczący kosę, i ten sam garb horyzontu, i ten sam deszcz, i niebo szare jak woda w akwarium  
[it was most dreadfully empty and hopeless: nothing but dirty green grass, water and dampness, raindrops falling on everything, and the rain slanting down and pollinating and pushing the world into the most hopeless emptiness, and the annoying sound of the scythes on the grass, and the sound of the scythe on a whetstone, and the same hump of the horizon, and the same rain, and the sky as gray as water in a fish tank] (BD 574).

It seems that nothingness is taking over the world because the day is rainy and cloudy. Nothingness does not triumph, however, it is but a lasting impression: “Wydawało się pod mokrymi batami deszczu, że świat już osiągnął zapowiadzanego błogostanu wyrównania entropii [...]” [It was raining heavily and it seemed that the world reached the blissful and desired state of the balance of

entropy [...] (BD 574). The description of the meadows in the rain, however, ends with a sentence which begins with the conjunction “tylko” [only], which counters the void: “Tylko trawy leżały pod deszczem gęste i otulające w swym uścisku ziemię i tchu, zdawało się, braknie, kontemplując tę beznadziejność łąk” [Only the thick grass lay under the rain, embracing the earth, and it seemed you could run out of breath contemplating this hopelessness of the meadows] (BD 574). Lush grass, ready to be cut, challenges the hopelessness of the rain, which can, however, be noticed if you look close enough. A superficial view of things evokes resignation and a sense of hopelessness. Haupt, however, seems to remember Coleridge’s advice: do not succumb to the lethargy of custom, do not settle for the obvious, the stereotypical, the known but look at the world in such a way as to be moved by ordinary things – “excite a feeling analogous to the supernatural.” Thanks to “poetic faith,” the clash with the hopelessness of nothingness does not end in defeat.

Indeed, the metaphysical experience of nothingness, and not a specific religious tradition, is a negative point of reference for Haupt. There is some evidence of Haupt’s religious beliefs in his works; for example, Haupt wrote and delivered a radio lecture (which was later published as an essay) about the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, DC.<sup>22</sup> It testifies to the writer’s extensive knowledge of Christian religious symbols, architecture, and art. Also, the “mass scene” in “Warianty” proves that Haupt knew a lot about religion – the narrator of the story is familiar with the liturgies of Roman Catholic Church.

In Haupt’s short stories, religion does not stop one from finding poetic faith. At the same time, however, religious rituals do not help one escape nothingness but indirectly inspire the search for different answers, as it was shown in “Warianty.” Such a vision of religion may be also found in a confession scene in the story “Appendicitis.” The title refers to the appendix surgery that the Lady is supposed to undergo. She urges her beloved to go to confession because she, somewhat superstitiously, thinks that it will help her recover. The protagonist steps toward and kneels at the confessional and openly admits that he does not believe in the power of the sacrament. He also does not confess his sins; instead, he openly states his motives:

Proszę księdza, bardzo mi przykro, że w tym miejscu i czasie znajduję się niewłaściwie. Robię to dlatego, że przyniesie to spokój dziewczynie, którą czekają ciężkie chwile. Nie mogę powiedzieć, czy jestem wierzący, i to nawet nie przez jakikolwiek rodzaj indyferentyzmu, tylko są to sprawy dla mnie zbyt skomplikowane, ażeby je móc samemu sobie rozstrzygnąć. Nie czuję tego, co się nazywa darem łaski, co pomaga może innym w tych sprawach. Proszę nie brać mi za złe, że nie dla siebie w takiej mierze, jak dla kogo innego, stwarzam tę... tę sytuację, a i tak jest to dla mnie ciężkie i nie dzieje się dla mnie bez trudności, i jest to... jest to dla mnie ciężkie. Bardzo księdza przepraszam i odwołuję się do jego ludzkich uczuć. Jestem przy tym śmiertelnie niespokojny i dostatecznie w tej chwili nieszczęśliwy, żeby zapomnieć o tym, że to, co mówię i robię, może być przykrym do słuchania i pojęcia dla kogo innego. Tyle...

[Father, I’m in the wrong place at the wrong time, and I’m very sorry for that. I’m doing this because it will bring peace to a girl who is going through hard times. I can’t say whether I am a believer, and

<sup>22</sup>See: Zygmunt Haupt, “Symbol i kamień. Narodowa Świątynia Niepokalanego Poczęcia w Waszyngtonie [Audycja radiowa]” [Symbol and stone. The Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, DC [Radio lecture]], in: *Z Roksolanii. Opowiadania, eseje, reportaże, publicystyka, warianty, fragmenty (1935–1975)* [From Red Ruthenia. Stories, essays, reports, journalism, variants, fragments (1935–1975)], ed. Aleksander Madyda (Toruń: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Mikołaja Kopernika, 2018), 214–218, and a version of this essay published a few years later in “Ameryka”, Haupt, 276–281.

not even because of indifferentism but because there are matters which are too complicated for me to be able to decide on my own. I do not feel what is called the gift of grace, which may help others. Please don't take it against me that that I create this... this situation; it is not for my sake but for the sake of somebody else, and it's hard for me, and it's not easy for me, and it's... it's difficult for me. Father, I would like to apologize to you, and I would like to talk to you man to man. I'm so mortally restless and so unhappy right now that I forget that what I say and do may be painful and difficult for someone else to hear and understand. That's all...] (BD 98).

Although absolution is formally granted, the penitent does not receive the grace of reconciliation. He is confused and embarrassed; he is worried even more about the Lady, even though he went to confession only to reassure her. Going to confession made the Lady happy, but the protagonist is disappointed, embarrassed, sad, and anxious. It is only after he leaves the hospital where the operation was to take place that he feels a kind of consolation: “[...] schodziłem sam z góry i niebo granatowe nad miastem rozpękało się w kawały nad moją rozpaczą i samotnością [...]” [I was walking down the mountain alone and the navy-blue sky over the city broke into pieces over my despair and loneliness] (BD 98). It is not the religious rite but the sight of the evening sky that brings consolation – the protagonist realizes that he is not completely alone in his despair; perhaps he is part of some greater whole, because the sky responds to or, in a way, partakes in his pain.

Importantly, the medical term “appendicitis” is highlighted in the title of the story. The medical procedure that the Lady undergoes is presented in the story as “wynalazek amerykańskich doktorów, mający uszczęśliwić ludzkość, a im napełnić kieszenie” [an invention of American doctors; it's supposed to make humanity happy and make American doctors rich] (BD 94). The surgery is thus presented as something unnecessary – a modern fad. The word “appendicitis” appears in a similar context in the story “Sprawa Wilsona. Biuletyn z gór” [Wilson's Case. Bulletin from the mountains]. One of the characters is forced to “wiary w konieczność operacji *appendicitis* tylko z nieufności dla jakichś niedomagań wewnętrznych” [believe in the need to undergo surgery to treat appendicitis, only out of distrust for some internal ailments].<sup>23</sup> In both short stories, the unnecessary procedure of removing what in medicine is seen as something additional, redundant was mentioned in the context of difficult, even borderline, experiences, that is fear for the life of a loved one and the death of fellow mountaineers in the Himalayas. In “Appendicitis,” the “fashionable” surgery inspires a reflection about life and death – not only because the medical procedure might go wrong but also in the wider context of loose associations, such as the death of the German soldiers who attacked Lviv in September 1939: “w parę lat potem wyszlę śmierć zamkniętą w skorupach setek granatów na przywarte do ziemi tułowie niemieckiej piechoty” [a few years later I will unleash death enclosed in the shells of hundreds of grenades onto the torsos of German infantry soldiers lying on the ground] (BD 101). In “Sprawa Wilsona. Biuletyn z gór,” the digression about appendicitis foreshadows the fatal ascent. The expedition's motto, “Rush up!,” turns out to be a curse. The narrator presents the entire story in terms of “giving in” to the magic of words – to primal uncontrolled language, to emotional statements which “get out of control” and have power over people: “Jedno słowo mogło być tak wspaniałe, że o mocy zdolnej dźwignąć człowieka na napięty łuk tęczy szczęścia, inne, okrutne

<sup>23</sup>Zygmunt Haupt, “Sprawa Wilsona. Biuletyn z gór” [Wilson's Case. Bulletin from the mountains], in: *Z Roksolanii. Opowiadania, eseje, reportaże, publicystyka, warianty, fragmenty (1935–1975)*, 45.

– rzucić w loch i w studnię hańby i śmierci [...]” [One word could be so wonderful, it had the power to lift man up to the strained arc of the rainbow of happiness, and another word could be cruel – it could throw man into a dungeon, into a well of shame and death].<sup>24</sup> The abyss of death is a constant threat – you can fall into it unexpectedly, succumbing to a deceptive impulse or fad.

In turn, a deliverance from nothingness is often unexpected. In “Sprawa Wilsona. Biuletyn z gór,” one word could counter the fatal call “Rush up!,” in “Appendicitis,” first the navy blue sky, which breaks into pieces, and then the landscape around the Podzamcze Lviv railway station make the protagonist stop worrying about the Lady’s life. He probably takes a tram to the top of the Lviv High Castle, where the hospital is, and he looks at the line of the horizon, with the railway station in front and the village Birky Dominikanski to the left. In the sentence which summarizes this narrative sequence, the point of view of a resident of Lviv before WW2 and the point of view of a soldier who recalls the city’s defense in September 1939 intertwine: “Przestałem zupełnie myśleć” [I stopped thinking completely] (BD 101). The eye of the tormented observer wanders up to the line of the horizon, as he nervously awaits the news from the hospital. This emotion, in turn, is intertwined with the memory of WW2 and, as result, the narrator’s mind is suspended somewhere beyond time. This, respectively, gives him comfort, diverts his attention from unsettling predictions and speculations. This entire experience – the feeling of imminent death and hopeless desolation which give way to the comforting abundance of life, and then to a kind of apathy, which silences the fear of nothingness – reveals the mystery of reality. The mind focused on the medical procedure produces a unique image of the world. This is evident in the reference to the death of the German soldiers – which was inspired not only by the city of Lviv, where the fighting took place, but also by the fear for the Lady’s life. The description of the tram line to the High Castle reveals that imagination is controlled by the fear of death: “Potem był już ostatni szczytowy przystanek, gdzie te szyny urywały się ostro i donikąd już nie można było jechać” [Then there was the last stop at the top, where the rails ended unexpectedly and there was nowhere to go] (BD 101). The rails themselves form a kind of appendicitis; the protagonist worries about them as much as he worries about the Lady. A trivial operation stimulates imagination to uncover the mystery of reality – sensed somewhere between nothingness and life.

In “Zabawa w zielone,” imagination works in a similar way; it is suspended in an undefined space-time: “Pomyśleć, ale innym zestawem myśli, / że nie ma tu ani początku, ani końca” [To think, but with a different set of thoughts / that there is neither beginning nor end here] (BD 584). In a series of fourteen sequences, Haupt attempts to devise a formula which will allow him to capture the mystery of reality, and he then puts it to the test. He is lying in a meadow and staring at the green grass and lush plants. The goal is to achieve the state defined thus: “Wypolerować sobie myśl jak srebrne zwierciadło” [Polish your thought like a silver mirror] (BD 585). He should not think too much about obvious associations. The kind of “letarg” [lethargy] (BD 585) thus achieved allows the narrator to experience the world anew. It is worth noting that such a “purification” of perception brings to mind Coleridge’s *Lyrical Ballads* and the postulated new way of experiencing reality. We find a similar artistic formula in the poetry of Wallace Stevens; for example, Stevens’s “Study of Two Pears”<sup>25</sup> is a poetic attempt to describe an object in an unbiased way – in a way that is not influenced by any

<sup>24</sup>Haupt, “Sprawa Wilsona” 48.

<sup>25</sup>See: Wallace Stevens, “The Study of two pears”, in: *The Collected Poems of Wallace Stevens* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2011), 196-197.

epistemological stereotypes. In Haupt's works, this cathartic lethargy helps one find hidden meaning in different forms of existence: "kod niesamowity, który mam odczytać" [an amazing code that I have to decipher] (BD 587). It is not unambiguous; sometimes the message is banal and at other times it delights with a plethora of meanings. The ending of "Zabawa w zielone" once again reminds us of the constant threat of death and nothingness: the tension between the horror of annihilation and the delightful abundance of existence conditions the understanding of the meaning of life.

The slightly surprising ending of "Warianty" – "Tylko nie być zaraz trąbą jerychońską" [Just don't be a Jericho trumpet] (BD 575) – is not only an ironic counterpoint to the solemn reflections that precede it. Importantly, it helps clarify how one should live and look at the world: "Bardzo trzeba się odseparować, odkroić, odlepić, odessać od cycka wiadomości, łona rzeczy omówionych i grubych" [You must truly separate yourself, cut yourself off, detach yourself, untie yourself from the tit of the news, from the womb of the discussed and important things]. One must distance oneself from a destructive, disruptive attitude. The metaphorical images conjured up in this story show that the point is not so much to tear down the prison walls as to escape from it down a footbridge. One may understand the world – fulfill the desire expressed in the first sentence of "Światy" [Worlds]: "Odkryj się, świecie [...]" [Reveal yourself, world [...]] (BD 565) – in and through the image of reality reflected in, as Haupt writes, a thin film of saliva formed around a loop made of wet (licked) grass.<sup>26</sup> An equally subtle moment of capturing the essence of reality<sup>27</sup> may be found in the ending of "Szpica:" we can see a lark singing on a summer morning; the pyramid of its voice is metaphorically based on green grass. The quasi-epiphany "to już! to już!" [that's it! that's it!] (BD 597) is revealed in a quiet squeak of a lancer's saddle, in the "fine" dust from under a horse's hooves. The entire image is only a projection of the possibility – signaled by the use of the future tense – of uncovering the mystery in the future.

In Haupt's works, poetic faith is not found through opposing and challenging dogmas and traditions.<sup>28</sup> One can only reach it by going "down a footbridge," that is through patiently waiting and believing that one day the mystery of reality will be revealed to you. As if following in the footsteps of Coleridge, Haupt tests the possibility of seeing, hearing, feeling, and understanding the things of this world, in their beauty and variety. In doing so, he also constantly questions the tools, approaches, and philosophies which are considered certain and safe; he constantly challenges systematized ways of reaching the truth, and at the same time he constantly needs them as a reference point, as a stimulus in his own search. Ultimately, this is how he finds true faith. It is *true* faith not only because it is devoid of appearances and sacrilegious sentiments but, above all, because it protects him from the onslaught of nothingness.

translated by Małgorzata Olsza

<sup>26</sup>See: BD 568.

<sup>27</sup>On "Plötzlichkeit," as defined by K.H. Bohrer, see: T. Mizerkiewicz, "«Ale będę. Ale będę». Proza Zygmunta Haupta a nowoczesna kultura obecności" [«But I will be. But I will be». Zygmunt Haupt's prose and the modern culture of presence], in: *Po tamtej stronie tekstów. Literatura polska a nowoczesna kultura obecności* [On the other side of texts. Polish literature and the modern culture of presence] (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM, 2013), 180–181, 198–199.

<sup>28</sup>Niewiadomski discusses, referring to the example of "Szpica," the constant tension between invention and principles in Haupt's works. See: Niewiadomski, 413–414.

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# KEYWORDS

*Samuel Taylor Coleridge*

**Zygmunt Haupt**

NATURAL SUPERNATURALISM

**ABSTRACT:**

This article was inspired by the importance which Zygmunt Haupt attached to the “willing suspension of disbelief” on behalf of the reader. It discusses how Coleridge’s formula may function in a context that is not strictly poetic. A “suspension of disbelief” and poetic faith are complementary concepts which encourage in literary and cultural studies deep reflection on the demise of religious faith in favor of “poetic faith,” which, as M.H. Abrams writes, may essentially be described as “natural supernaturalism.” The article argues that this modernist experience may be found in Haupt’s works.



*willing suspension of disbelief*

MEYER HOWARD ABRAMS

Wallace Stevens

ROMANTICISM

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