

Comparisons and Discourses

Essays on Comparative Literature
and Theory



COMPARISONS AND DISCOURSES
ESSAYS ON COMPARATIVE LITERATURE AND THEORY

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AND THEORY

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COMPARISONS AND DISCOURSES. INTRODUCTION

Comparisons and Discourses is one of a series of compilations of texts coming out in the half-yearly *Porównania* in the years 2007–2015. It reflects the major issues identified by the Editors of the periodical and its Authors in that period. The discourses signalled in the title include primarily postcolonial studies, which have recently become one of the major modes of addressing the past and present status of Central Europe, and of necessity also a *tertium comparationis*, a platform for making comparisons. Postcolonialism has proved a capacious category, inclusive of the languages and tools used by many new theories such as geopoetics, gender studies and posthumanism. Introducing new theoretical tools goes hand in hand with opening up Comparative Studies to discourses other than literature. Therefore, the volume abounds in texts analysing realms such as film, theatre or the visual arts, as well as those that address the transformations of social life in Central and Eastern Europe after 1989. Within such an approach, literature becomes one of the many forms of reflection on the quality of life in Central Europe, a yardstick of the language used in reference to themselves and to Others by successive generations of Central Europeans. Comparative Studies themselves, as evident through the discursive receptivity demonstrated in this volume, are changing from a discipline closely linked with an analysis of a literary text towards a successor of theory (of literature).

The first part of the book sums up the conference “The Cultural Impact of the Postcolonial Situation”, held at the Adam Mickiewicz University Institute of Polish Studies on 6–7 May 2017. It reflected on the use of postcolonial methodologies for analysing contemporary art in Central and Eastern Europe, and indirectly – for analysing local communities. It starts with Dorota Kołodziejczyk’s text highlighting the typology of postcolonial theory in the context of Central and Eastern Europe. The author points out fields such as reflection on identity, border studies and reflection on the global aspect of literature, especially the cosmopolitanism of the novel, demonstrating the wealth of forms of being on the periphery. Anna Gawarecka looks into Czech national myths in the literary works of Vladimír Macura, Daniela Hodrová and Miloš Urban. Czech postmodernist novel games refer to the National Revival, ever-present in the collective memory, only to deconstruct and debunk its myth. Jacek Nowakowski in his text about the images of the Orient in Polish Cinema after the Second World War wonders if it is possible to abandon the stereotypes originating in the tradition of adaptations for the screen of novels by Henryk Sienkiewicz such as *In Desert and Wilderness* or *Colonel Wolodyjowski*, heavily based on colonial clichés. In his article *Deracination and Rootedness. The Drama of Shifting Borders in Polish Contemporary Theatre*, Piotr Dobrowolski addresses the general tendency of Polish theatre authors to break free from the monolith of an unequivocal national narrative, this time in reference to the so-called Regained Territories. He moreover analyses the theatre productions after the transition period, empowering national and ethnic minorities and citizens of the Third Reich, who continued to live in these areas after the war. Błażej Warlocki in his text *Three Waves of Homosexual Emancipation in Poland* discusses three decades of homosexual activism in Poland since 1981, starting with the discursive invisibility of gays and lesbians through to the politicising of homosexuality and homophobia.

The second section of the book includes texts, proceedings from a conference “The Return of Space. Central European Geopoetics and Nostalgia”, hosted by the Adam Mickiewicz University Institute of Polish Studies on 7–8 May 2012. It essentially focused on (post)national space read through the prism of a new theory of space in literature and arts – geopoetics (the spatial turn). Subject to analyses are texts concerning places operating in more than one national discourse as well as mythical, imaginary, phantasmatic places and travel litera-

ture, both emigration and migration ones. Lenka Németh Vítová's text *Re-Discovering of the Sudetenland in Czech Literature After 1989* concentrates on the literary images of the Czech-German and Czech-Austrian frontier in the art of Jaroslav Rudiš, Radka Denemarková and Josef Urban. The author argues that with the aid of e.g. mythologizing, plot and narrative inspired by actual events, contemporary Czech literature endeavours to dwell on the repressed and hidden historical aspects of space. The text by Sylwia Nowak-Bajcar *Memory and Oblivion Versus the Yugoslavian Heritage. The Case of Croatian and Serb Emigrant Literature. A Preliminary Diagnosis* addresses the many and varied valorisations of the legacy of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in post-Yugoslav émigré narratives. The case of the Balkans undermines the *modus* of postmodern (e)migrant literature in post-soviet states: it most often addresses the experience of multiculturalism, while multiculturalism was one of the cornerstones of the Yugoslavian identity. Dobrochna Dabert in her *(N)ostalgia and Irretrievability in Central European Cinema* discusses examples of unique repressions of the memory of communism in Central European cinema, marked with a nostalgia for the past system. German, Czech, Hungarian, and Polish movies furnish many examples of the pleasure of remembering communism. A special form of negating this nostalgia is an equally selective practice of irretrievability of memory, i.e. an escape from remembering, a rejection of sentimentalism in Ukrainian, Polish, Czech, Slovak, and Romanian movie productions. Tomasz Derlatka in his text *Vineta – the Literary Lost Territory of Western Slavs? Considerations Based on Selected Texts in Western Slavonic Literatures* addresses the motif of Vineta, a legendary or real Slavic and Nordic Baltic city, identified with today's Wolin, a phantasm of the "past lost" for Western Slavonic nations. The author discerns this motif in Polish, Czech, Slovak, Kashubian and, in the most intriguing rendition, in Upper Lusatian literature. Kinga Piotrowiak-Junkiért addresses the geopoetics in the literary oeuvre of Ádám Bodor, a Hungarian writer who constructs the mythologised area of Transylvania, through which he tells a story of the Hungarian minority in communist Romania and the Hungarian "Trianon syndrome", and even provides a metaphor of the difficult political history of the entire Central Europe. First and foremost, however, he addresses more universal issues, such as living in isolation, creating borders and mechanisms of totalitarian authority.

The group of texts dedicated to comparative contexts in Czesław Miłosz's works comes from the conference "Dialogues of Miłosz – Dialogues with Miłosz", taking place in Poznań on 28–30 November 2011 within the framework of the Miłosz: East – West Festival. The articles address the relations of the reflection and oeuvre of the author of *Native Realm* towards the East and West of Europe and his interpretations of eminent European writers and philosophers. Marek Wedemann in his text *Between Colony and Empire. Miłosz and Dostoyevsky* writes about Czesław Miłosz's opposition to the western Russification of the cultures of Central Europe and glamorising only Russian culture. This opposition crystallised among others during the seminar on Fyodor Dostoyevsky, conducted by Miłosz at Berkeley University. In her text *An Emigrant About Emigrants. Flawless Portraits of Oskar Miłosz and Josif Brodsky*, Agnieszka Czyżak discusses Miłosz's strategy of teaching through creating poetic images, in this case of a respectful and admiring portrait of his cousin Oskar Miłosz and Josif Brodsky; Miłosz shared with the latter the desire to save values and a vision of creation as a reaction to the predicament of the world. Zbigniew Kopeć, when addressing the poetic dialogue between Aleksander Wat and Miłosz, sees Russia as its core, and more precisely the debate of both men of letters with the idea of communism originating there. Agata Stankowska in her text *Czesław Miłosz and Osip Mandelstam on Language and Culture. Meetings and Departures* describes Miłosz's ambivalent attitude to Mandelstam: between a conviction about the autonomy of poetic language and its necessary contribution to culture.

The section dedicated to intercultural communication in Poland opens with Eliza Grzelak's *The Other in Poland. Intercultural Communication in a National State*. The author analyses the impact of post-totalitarian memory on the current relations between the dominant community and ethnic minorities and concludes that despite the introduction of relevant legal provisions introduced after 1989, Poles' attitude to otherness have changed precious little. Joanna Grzelak-Piaskowska and Emilia Kledzik in the article *Command of the Polish Language and the Integration of the Roma in Poland – an Outline* present the results of studies on the degree of command of the Polish language and school experience of three generations of the Polska Roma group. The results indicate that the most pressing concern within the largest Polish ethnic group is illiteracy and secondary illiteracy, while the Polish education system, ill-suited to the conditions of a multicul-

tural society, leaves out content related to glottodidactics and education presenting cultural differences. The text by Elżbieta Nowikiewicz *Microhistories of German-Speaking Residents of the Poznań Province and Geopolitics* focuses on the degree to which residents of the Eastern March, called by Poles living there the Prussian annexed territory, accepted the official Prussian colonist discourse, promoting the German roots and culture of the area via the so-called myth of the German East. The author does so with using autobiographies of the German-speaking writers from this area.

The last part of the book concerns new perspectives in Comparative Studies. It starts with Hanna Mamzer's article *The Animal as a Subject: Metastrategies of Colonising Nature*. Opening comparative studies to inter-species relations, Mamzer discusses the ways of man's appropriating natural space, assuming that all the tools produced by classical colonialism, indicated by postcolonial theoreticians, can be safely applied to the relationship between the human being and the natural world. Describing the process of appropriating nature, the author indicates three metastrategies: linguistic, behavioural and emotional, stressing that they coincide with the strategies once used to colonise culturally-defined areas. Danuta Sosnowska in the article *Cultural Impact as Tradition and Challenge for Czech, Ukrainian and Polish Comparative Studies* is part of the current of Central European Comparative Studies, the focus of *Porównania* periodical, asking about the impact of geopolitics on the development of each of the three Comparative Studies mentioned in the title and refreshes the concept of cultural influence, present in the reflection of seminal Comparative Studies scholars from this region. Finally, the reader will revel in the essay by Ryszard K. Przybylski, presenting how modernist erasure as an artistic practice undermining visibility paved the way for the postmodern tactile reality, which means experiencing the world via contemporary information and communications technologies, copies of the human nervous system.

Comparative Studies, originating in the study of sources and in the category of influence, since the 1990s has been faced with the category of national literature, usually less focused on theoretical reflection than on proving its being masterful. Jonathan Culler in his text *Comparative Literature, At Last!* welcomes students of the Comparative Literature course as follows: "Welcome to comparative literature, where we do not believe that national literature is the logical

basis of literature study, but be warned that while doing Comp. Lit. you also need to act as if you were in a national literature department". The category of national literature/culture is a point of reference for each of the texts published in this volume. However, this is not a blind use since, as the great supporter of world literature Johann Wolfgang Goethe observed, comparison necessitates distance. Comparative Studies as a discipline of the Humanities has supported literary history and indirectly its national focus. The experience of the Second World War and the inspiration from critical discourses, in particular of postcolonial studies, made the discipline a critical study of any and all institutionally-based collective entities. The editor of this volume holds this value of Comparative Studies in special esteem at the time of resurgence of national and ethnocentric tendencies.

PART ONE

THE CULTURE OF POSTCOLONIAL
SITUATION

WHERE IS A PLACE FOR CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE IN POSTCOLONIAL STUDIES? POSSIBLE TRAJECTORIES

The aim of my article is to consider the possible travel trajectories in postcolonial space in order to show how research on Central and Eastern European regions connects with critical globalization discourses. How can we integrate postcolonial reconfigurations related to the way we think about Central and Eastern Europe into the global map of networks connecting the emergent and transitional (Hannerz 48) environments of meaning-creation? With regard to the postcolonial inspiration in critical discourses in Poland, as well as in Central and Eastern Europe, I locate a key significance in the mutual communication between “habitats of meaning” (Hannerz, 22) developed in the new peripheries of postcolonial reflection on the “center”, which of course is not the only center, but a dispersed archipelago of discourses. The intense and rich postcolonial research in this part of Europe exceeds the simple paradigm of multiplying the available theoretical matrices. Transferring postcolonial categories onto Central and Eastern European history and culture facilitates a new way of thinking about the nation, oppression and resistance, dependence, its long-term effects, identities and their border meanings, subjectivity as a site of agency, history as an ideological construct and a political tool.

What follows will be my attempt to identify the main trajectories of postcolonial thought in relation to Central and Eastern Europe and

to consider how they can be integrate with the map of critical reflection on globalization.

When examining Central and Eastern Europe, postcolonialism is most visibly implemented as a means of **identifying features of colonial dependency in the history of the region**. This research option employs the conceptual apparatus and methodologies developed in postcolonial studies in an effort to analyze the nature and influence of colonial dependence on the development of a region as a whole and its particular countries and societies in relation to Europe (understood usually as Western Europe). This area of research usually includes an analysis of Polish colonial discourse, that is, the paradox of being simultaneously in the position of the colonized and colonizer (Fiut) (Bakula: 2006) (Gosk) (Borkowska). The logical continuation of this line of thinking is to analyze the postwar dependence on the Soviet Union within colonial categories and the situation following the collapse of communism as a postcolonial condition, whose main feature is its position as a breakthrough moment in terms of political transformations and the attendant social, cultural and economic changes. The scope of this research includes postdependence discourses, i.e. those which appeared after the period of dependency or at its closing period and which signal the epistemic overhaul as well as the attempts to outline decolonization programs – initiatives to decolonize knowledge outside of the global, colonial epistemology (Tlostanova, Mignolo).

Critical reassessment of identity discourses seems to be an intrinsic element of thinking about colonialism and the post-region. The postcolonial perspective quite naturally encourages revision of identity constructs and examining their place and interaction with the whole spectrum of social discourses. How relating the situation of Poland to the postcolonial condition can yield starkly opposite research outcomes. Ewa Thompson's and Jan Sowa's analyses are case in point. For Ewa Thompson, the colonial situation in Poland began with the Partitions, which deprived the country, along with the whole region thereafter labeled "Eastern Europe", of its subjectivity (which had already been distinctly defined, for example, in the idea of Sarmatism). As a result Poland was barred from actively participating in modern discourse. This is a situation that continues to this day and its most characteristic postcolonial, as well as painful, consequence, with real ramifications with regard to politics and the economy, is the ina-

bility characteristic of the Polish community to develop its own identitarian and, therefore, modernization programs, which would guarantee Poland its autonomy and the status of an active subject in the international community (Thompson: 2007, 2011, 2012). For Jan Sowa, the situation is the opposite. The direct cause of the Partitions was the country's inability to think a viable form of itself in modernity, in the form of the nation and state, which would be able to confront the challenges of modernity. This went along the inability to create an egalitarian social structure centered on the middle class that would preserve statehood. The passage to modernity was thwarted by the nobility, who refused to share its national identity with any other social class. The Partitions are thus, according to Sowa, to be understood as a modernization force (Sowa: 2012, 2013). I am citing these two radically diverse positions not to determine who is correct but to consider the postcolonial methodology, which leads to such different ideological stances. Taking such a wide synthesizing approach, the researcher always risks generalizing, either in a top-down manner by imposing a theoretical framework that contradicts the particular examples or a bottom-up manner, metonymically, by treating each example as a general rule. Jan Sowa, in line with nineteenth century historicism, interprets colonialism (here: the situation of Poland being deprived of its sovereignty) as a historical necessity and refers to the modernizing influence the Partitions had on Poland. This sounds exactly as if Marx's thoughts on British imperialism in India (Marx) were transferred onto another geographic situation.

The developed critical discourse in both radically different analyses, which take the assumption of Poland's postcolonial condition as a given, is subordinated, in a surprisingly similar manner, to the problem of identity, and treats the "peripherality" of Poland and Eastern Europe as a state which should be overcome. Ewa Thompson construes this project of incorporating "peripheries" into the hegemonic order as a struggle for national identity, one which is developed through pedagogical efforts (understood perhaps as a nationwide effort to shape attitudes and beliefs). The national identity emerges from Thompson's work as an ideologically and ethically homogenous subjectivity, whose *raison d'être* seems to be in its communicating, validating and consolidating itself, which is to mean its identitarian integrity and, ultimately, its true indigeneity recovered from the resources of national culture and history. For Sowa, in turn, despite

declaring to have done away with this category altogether, identity returns as the Real of a historiographic projection. It is precisely the national identity of the Polish nobility, its exclusionary character and foundational lack (understood in Lacanian terms and realized as escapist phantasms of nativism, like Sarmatism) which impeded the development of modern Polish subjectivity in line with the West model, thus effectively sentencing the country to a permanently peripheral status. Granted that in the case of both authors the use of postcolonial apparatus merits consideration, even if controversial for their ideological presumptuousness. However, in both cases, thinking about how to overcome Poland's peripheral status by means of some autarky which emanates from, respectively for each of the two authors, a worked-through (Sowa) or recuperated (Thompson) identity seems to have its source in a teleological approach to history, which, in turn, leads to substituting the category of active subjectivity (agency) with a psychology-driven (psychologized) category of identity, which is, additionally, ideologically fixed¹. It is therefore worth drawing attention to how postcolonial historiography (developed, for example, by Subaltern Studies Group) utilizes the category of national identity as an exclusively discursive phenomenon, which comes into play in class, political and ideological divisions, a phenomenon that is differentiated and relational also in respect to the legacy of colonialism and is also able to create "peripheral" or "minor" histories in relation to modernity (Chakrabarty: 2000, 2002).

With regard to the above, I would like to venture the claim that postcolonialism in Poland is still held hostage by identitarian thinking and we should somehow emancipate ourselves from this state of affairs. Above all, postcolonial categories have proven themselves most useful as a critique of identity constructs. What is at stake here is not really the methodologically easy deconstruction of identity, which exposes its discursive nature, including its violent and oppressive performances, because it has been already done many times. The point is in taking advantage of the potential inherent in postcolonial

¹ Cf. Irena Grudzińska-Gross's interesting contribution in the debate in „Did the Holocaust replace the bourgeois revolution in Poland?” In *Krytyka Polityczna*, April 25, 2013, where she claims that Polish history is usually approached as if it were an identitarian issue. She proposes moving away from identitarian thinking, away from history especially where arriving at historical truth could damage this identity. (Leder, Grudzińska-Gross, Dudek, Sierakowski)

theory for a dialogical opening of identity discourses to their own relationality, mutuality and liminality/borderliness, beyond the stubborn narcissism of the mirror stage, in which they can develop only as a phantasm of plenitude or a phantasm of lack. Postcolonial theory has always strengthened identity as a space of discursive agency and challenged its essentialist "fact" (Fanon).

With the help of a postcolonial theoretical framework, we could consider how to think transnationally through and beyond national debates, which portray society as being divided and increasingly locked in a narcissistic phantasm. Transnationalism could be defined as a space and practice where subjects transcend borders, regardless of whether they assume a dominant or marginal position (Lionett, Shih, Minor Transnationalism). Transnationalism is a part of the globalizational processes; it can be top-down and bottom-up, and of course the working assumption is that the bottom-up manifestations of transnationalism by definition constitute a critical force in relation to globalization. Case studies concentrate most of all on diasporas, refugees, minorities as groups undermining a consolidated national identity, whose specific symptom is to exclude otherness. However, it is rarely noted that the effect of minorities/diasporas (i.e., the exclusion effect, stereotypization, orientalization) is here secondary in relation to the constitutive ambivalence of a nation (which is a product of modernity, whose emergence and continuity is expected to bind the nation to a cultural system, **thanks to** which and **against which** the nation emerged, as Benedict Anderson proves in his study of the imagined aspect of the nation (Anderson). Comparative studies, which examine the national debates in post-communist regions and were comprehensively developed by Bogusław Bakula (Bakula: 2014), should therefore be expanded by an analysis of the phantasms of nativism which underlie thinking about nation – its collective unconscious manifesting itself sometimes as an aberrational fantasy of power, which in turn could be read as a symptom of lack (Žižek).

If an analysis of national debates in the region of Central and Eastern Europe is to be aided by postcolonial theory, it should take into account classic propositions of reading the nation as a discursive figure, whose constitutive feature, as indicated by Anderson and Tom Nairn (Nairn), is ambivalence. Homi Bhabha proposes to translate this ambivalence of the nation into the self-deconstructive split where the performative form of the nation (writing) constantly challenges

and undermines its pedagogical accumulation in the form of tradition and history (Bhabha).

Comparative studies, which, on the one hand, investigate the pedagogical aspect of national authority and, on the other, demand vigilance in relation to its phantasmatic projections, compel us to ask a question whether it is worth thinking about Central and Eastern Europe as a common transnational space, one which produces its own objects of knowledge on the basis of historical experience particular to a region of a combined dependence on European empires and communism; as a multilingual society which is not only based on identitarian criteria as it is on a certain commonality of imagination and sensitivity, inscribing itself within the postcolonial experience, something which Weber calls community of sentiment.

It is worth, then, positioning research focused on the critical memory cultures within this transnational perspective, whose analytical potential is guaranteed by a cognitive strategy of thinking through national (and community) categories and projects, and also beyond it (Huyssen). The postcolonial perspective can bring critical insight into the techniques and politics of memory, the aim of which is to build a consolidated, most often national, identity. Depoliticizing the critical discourses of memory does not entail depriving memory of its inevitable political meaning (the mere fact that memory and its social expression is dialogical assumes a debate, discord, conflicting versions of remembering, selective treatment of archives, etc.); instead, it subjects these affiliations to the same analysis as the object itself. The postcolonial perspective in the work of critical memory cultures does not aim to discard the concept of nation, but to open it to its own limits, to a confrontation with what it attempts to eliminate or erase within itself. Critical memory cultures strive towards a revision of those places in a nation's historiography that constitute a problem for consolidating the politics of memory and resist the efforts to close the national narrative in its pedagogical, holistic horizon. Like in Olga Tokarczuk's *House of Day, House of Night*, the work of imagination sometimes has to create *ab nihilo*.

Who was the guy who spent his nights changing German place names into Polish ones? Sometimes he had a flash of poetic genius, and at other times an awful word-inventing hangover. He did the naming from the start, he created this rugged mountainous world. (Tokarczuk: 2002, 176)

Another trajectory with considerable dialogical potential is connected to border studies, which critically analyze the status of Central and Eastern Europe as a borderland, where the distinctiveness characterizing Western Europe is effaced. Maria Todorova's classic study draws our attention to the fact that the very politics of European studies in American universities render Eastern Europe a marked category (Todorova). The stereotypical imagology of Eastern and Central Europe includes: the image of a limitless border – the end of Europe, a minor Europeanness mixed with exotic otherness, lagging modernization, incomplete transformation, etc. These, in turn, became the object of subversive mimicry found in the works of such authors as Andrzej Stasiuk, Yurii Andrukhovych and Oksana Zabuzhko, in which the Western orientalizing perspective is turned into an ironic self-stereotypization. Its apparent goal – satiating a narcissistic fantasy of the West with a radical otherness of the region (narcissistic because its aim is to validate its own ego) – not only exposes the shame of such desires but also forces the objects of its own fantasies to confront the image of itself as condensed exoticism represented as sheer aberration. Stasiuk's travelogues are usually presented in critical commentaries as self-Orientalizing fantasies of unruly resistance to the force of modernizing globalization exerting itself on the region which manages to fantastically (and impossibly) reconcile pre-modernity with postmodernity. What appears to be the most valuable aspect of Stasiuk's writing hailing from the edges of the continent is the image of an aberrational cosmopolitanism characteristic of this lesser Europe, which exposes, paradoxically, the provincialism of the West entrapped in endless self-replication:

These questions can sound like complaints, but they're not. They speak only of West's the provincialism, which leads it to perceive the rest of the continent as a failed copy of oneself. (64) [...] Yes indeed, two hundred million new Europeans is a real challenge. [...] (Stasiuk 74)

It is worth noticing how this passage develops a critique of how Western Europe orientalizes Eastern Europe by turning it into a phantasm of otherness. It would seem that liminality is an aspect of a particular region which Western critics gladly reach for, as if getting involved in orientalizing practices was in this case safer and more acceptable. In these works the region becomes a heterotopia of illusion, dominated by an image of ethnic-national mixing, but without

taking into account the complex transcultural consciousness of the borderland that anteceded that of contemporary Western Europe, where multiculturalism figures as a postcolonial and postmodern phenomenon. The research correcting such simplifications and stereotypizations should show how border spaces develop their own epistemic system – a border epistemology which opens the “in-between” space onto the multiplicity of history, encompassing such histories that include discontinuity (together with attempts to erase border spaces from the postwar map) and onto incommensurability in relation to the historicism of modernity. A valuable contribution to research on Central and Eastern Europe we can call border studies has been the understanding of border spaces as objects of spectral knowledge – the erased or displaced presence which returns as a rhetorical figure, as an elusive difference defining the *genius loci*, or directly as a lacunae resulting from profound deterritorialization or historical violence, or even extermination. Here is where postcolonial literature meets the Central and Eastern European literature of displacement, representing these phenomena as a lost battle with silence, the consequence of which is the impossibility to articulate meaning:

the world vanishes from deep inside, from the center, too deep for history – either by way of common sense or science – to be able to reach down there. (Kertész 78)

Here it appears the twentieth century did bring a horrific catastrophe, something like a tectonic break, as a consequence of which everything that had happened and existed earlier – say, before 1939 – fell into oblivion. (Andrukhovych 7)

This is not the silence of an imperfect memory ... it is not some presence; it is simply a break, hole, emptiness, in which there are no words. (Ghosh 213)

That type of apocalyptic disruption of continuity resulting in silence is supplemented in literary texts with the figure of the impossible return – as a ghost, specter, recollection, a flash from the past palimpsestially overlying the present, or, likewise, as an incredible feeling of belonging beyond the individual experience. From the rich literature which addresses the problem of border spaces and liminality, I will draw on an example in which the attempt to represent this type of spectral knowledge is connected with the search of a genre – a rhetoric or formula which could appropriately do justice to the elusive heterotopia of the border space and periphery:

Artur Pepa didn't know. He also didn't know what to do with Hutsul country. There existed a whole branch of scholarship about it, scattered across hundreds of books and therefore dispersed, diminished, thus he didn't know what to start with and whether to start at all. ... For no one had ever created the one Book that would comprise everything: the vernacular, the lambswool, the seven traditional ways of cheesemaking ... (Andruxhovyh 102–104)

Border studies, which work to include the description of locality as difference in a wider horizon of reflection on the processes of creating cultural spaces, direct us towards a reflection on the worldliness of literature, which should be understood as an ethos of reading developed by Edward Said and defined in *The World, The Text and the Critic* (1983). The worldliness of literary work, especially in the context of comparative literature, determines it as a material being functioning in a particular historical and social narrative, immanent in relation to the surrounding reality which contains also the political-ideological discourse. Said advocates acknowledging in the worldliness of a literary work its role as a cultural authority, its history in the literary canon or in the effort to join the canon, or also, with regard to world literature as a particularly ideological construct, its performative act which extends far beyond the textual play of signifiers (Said). Postcolonial criticism very astutely follows Said's premise from the beginning defining literature as: language, representation, circulation and canon together with its margins as a place of active subjectivity created in defined contexts resulting from colonialism, in particular migration, mobility, separation of language from its place, and the place from its history and social materiality. The worldliness of literature constitutes in relation to globalization an interventional and critical force. If a novel has been seen as a more worldly genre than others on account of its entrenchment in quotidian reality, social milieus and political discourses, and also on account of its relative ease with which it can cross linguistic and cultural barriers and in which it organized social narrations, then the world-creating potential of this literary genre and its cosmopolitical status deserves particular attention. The cosmopolitanism of the postcolonial novel constitutes its defining feature – the awareness of a world beyond the directly experienced locality, the awareness of the world as a lost locality and uprootedness, colonial (and post-) migrations, in particular the migrations of underprivileged and subordinated classes – all this defines another form of being in the world from that of cosmopolitanism ty-

pically understood as a privilege of freedom from rootedness and unlimited affiliation to the world. In the new cosmopolitanism, which I propose to see as one of the consequences of the postcolonial condition, the awareness of interior and exterior forms of habitation is of utmost significance. On the one hand, new cosmopolitanism proves geographical and social situatedness of "habitudes of thinking and feeling" (Robbins), and on the other hand, it produces translocal forms of affiliation (Robbins 2-3). This type of affiliation completely alters the center/periphery arrangement, mostly because the epistemic (in this case I will call it "world-creating") advantages of mobility are no longer limited to the privileged elites. The cosmopolitanism of the mobile peripheries develops knowledge (the awareness of the world) and politics (particularly as a voice for those who find themselves on the worse side of the global work division), as well as a sense of an inherently conflicting aesthetics, and, as such, it becomes related to the category of the sublime (Tlostanova 2005).

The main object of research on the new forms of cosmopolitanism is precisely this non-universalizing, grassroots, ironic awareness of the globalized world. It manifests itself as a "cosmopolitics" in the novels of the new diaspora, post-diaspora, in postcolonial returns that could be labelled second-wave to historical turning points and the consequences of colonial dependencies that continue their influence far into the postmodern era. These studies should also include the problematics of the West/rest of the world dualism going beyond the revisionist formula of postcolonialism (Orhan Pamuk is one of the most obvious examples). Cosmopolitanism of these novels is based on their global geographical reach (more precisely, transcontinental relocations resulting in deep changes in the content and function of locality, minority communities and larger types of nations, class and ethnicities), on a thematic scope encompassing mobility, sometimes transgenerational, or taking place over a few centuries (novels about smaller globalization movements located in the area of, for example, the Arabian Peninsula or the Indian subcontinent); the migration of labor and subaltern classes - plantation workers in Western India or western colonies and dominions in Asia. These novels are distinguished by their epic scope in the sense that many of them are meant to supplement or undermine the grand historical narratives (the narrative of the modernizing effect of an Empire), with subaltern histories of mass migrations mobilized by the development of capitalism.

Within the scope of this criticism we could also include a reflection on the new economic emigration to Western Europe, its cultural and sociological specificity, particularly where it leads to the formation of new, subjected groups. For example, Kiran Desai's novel *The Inheritance of Loss* develops the idea of a Third World (or peripheral) cosmopolitan based on the experiences of a contemporary Candide, a poor emigrant from India who came to America and who realizes his immigrant dream in the backrooms of New York restaurants, in kitchens and cellars, that is, in a world hidden from the eyes of a global consumer. For Olga Tokarczuk, migration gives the possibility to lighten the weight of identity which ties a person to a particular place, effectively immobilizing them. Just like in *House of Day, House of Night* the "I" dreams itself as an empty place, in *Flights* it develops as a project of the traveling "I", freed from identity, migrating from something rather than to something. In *Flights*, the migrant work is an element of anonymous workforce, existing outside the stories which make a person – otherwise just a biomass – a subject:

I took odd jobs wherever I happened to be. ... There were a lot of people like me there. We were paid under the table, and never questioned about where we came from or what our plans for the future were. ... Immigrants still en route to that fair, idyllic country they were sure was somewhere in the West, where people are brothers and sisters, and a strong state plays the role of parent; fugitives from their families ... the confused, the melancholic, those who were always cold. ... Wanderers, vagabonds. Crazy people ... deported back to their countries of origin on the basis of rules and regulations shrouded in mystery. (Tokarczuk 2017: 14–15)

As part of critical discourse on globalization, new cosmopolitanism reveals the structures of horizontal, lateral, and non-hierarchical connections; it develops relational and decentered discourses (not conditioned solely by the center) and contributes to a new methodology of analyzing cultural and demographic phenomena, which find their reflection in historiographic and novel discourses, i.e., in translocations, hybridization, locality and uprootedness. What is characteristic in these studies is their critical approach to identity paradigms, which have until recently dominated postcolonial studies, as well as to identity politics pertinent in academic programs and research. Instead, these studies turn towards the less confining discourses referring to the widely understood space allowing to take into account the phenomena of mobility, transfer of people and ideas, that is, generally

speaking, dynamic “flows” (Appadurai) in contemporary culture. Border studies, especially the discourses of Eastern European peripherality and transnational provincial cosmopolitanisms operating in the region inscribe themselves, due to their characteristic awareness of locality, in the formula of critical discourses on globalization. In my opinion, many authors, and literary trends from Central and Eastern Europe are active participants in the new feeling of worldliness found in global postcolonial writing. Novels which include the themes of border spaces – in the Polish case the novel of post-displacement, particularly related to the novels more or less appropriately defined as novels of the small or mythic motherlands after 1989, revising myths of belonging and acknowledging the historical chasm in the experience of locality and familiarity would be an important contribution to the current of “cosmopolitical” novel.

The critical potential of Central and Eastern Europe that should be observed in research on the region and its cultures dwells in its peripherality that seems to be an object of discontent and even shame, because it is understood mainly as a lack of autonomy in constructing identity projects and, consequently, participating in a plethora of cultural and economic projects of modernity. However, the wider perspective, transnational and in many ways trans-border, allows us to reveal the richness of forms of living in a “peripheral” world, including critical participation in the flows of globalization. Peripheries have always developed their own, more or less provincial (though always to some degree provincializing the hegemonic centers) cosmopolitanisms. The critical potential of a comparative and “cosmopolitical” criticism lies not in diagnosing, with the help of a postcolonial theoretical framework, how a particular region can rival the leaders of modernization or why they will never be able to catch up, but in including within the main currents of critical thought an examination of regions as complicated historiographic and geopolitical constructs, framed as close peripheries or close otherness in relation to European “norms”. The cosmopolitanism of Eastern and Central European peripheries would therefore contribute a form of “rooted cosmopolitanism (Appiah 91), in which the awareness of belonging to the world would be connected with an awareness of connection with place – nation, local cultural space, ethnicity, language, and also other, more imaginary forms of affiliation, such as literature and cultural landscape.

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HODROVÁ, URBAN, MACURA – A POSTMODERN PERCEPTION OF CZECH NATIONAL MYTHS

Vladimír Macura, one of the major and most influential scholars studying Czech literature of the 19th century, in the introduction to his epoch-making book *Znamení zrodu*, the foundations of the semiological model of culture of the National Revival period (late 18th century – mid-19th century) admits: *V jistém smyslu bude snad náš pohled demystifikační, alespoň v té míře, jako je demystifikační pohled na začátek jako na začátek. Avšak je naším přáním, aby i za žánrem vnuceným autorovým odstupem a snad i za jeho přeintelektualizovanou showvavostí bylo dobře čitelné čiré dojetí, okouzlení a možná trochu nostalgický smutek...* (Macura 1995: 8). On the one hand, the above statement strikes the reader with the subjective and emotional attitude of the interpreter to the issues studied, surprising in an avowed proponent of the structural and semiotic school. On the other hand, it is expressive of the need to justify the signals, evident in the text, of a departure from established cultural and literary axioms, questioning them and demonstrating an autonomous approach, not so much antithetical but rather complementary and enriching.

Macura's book, following Lotman's definition of the operation of culture mechanisms (Lotman, Uspiensky 147-170), proposed a concept of the National Revival based on the dominance of symbols and emblems. They impact collective consciousness but are clearly distant

from the real indicators of life practice. The scholar suggests that, first of all in the first half of the 19th century the very existence of the Czech nation was limited solely to textual representation, with no (or nearly no) corresponding social processes. Among others, Macura addresses in his text the question of mythology, which to his mind defines the fundamental canon of collective reflection and dominates all socio-political motivations of a renewal of Czech national identity (Macura 1995: 79). The Revival project assumes here the form of a myth which brings together all the ideological and cultural components into a unified system, with no provision for any outside, being confined to its own elements, pushing off all foreignness beyond the limits of clearly defined space of what is national, and unaccommodating of any heterogenic additions.

The myths, filtered through an entire system of corrective mechanisms, codified in nineteenth-century literature, continue to be a yardstick of Czech national identity, although at present, in the world of a postmodernist undermining of all certainties, are no longer the ultimate factor defining a repertory of collective values. In his book *Bývali Čechové*, Jiří Rak addresses the role of common images concerning history, its development, character, and interpretation. It is these images that determine the stock of beliefs that are the focus of the current perception of rudimentary markers of national existence (Rak 5). This means, among others, that the fatalism of the past, transforming into variable coordinates of historical policy, has continued to define the Czech nation to date, determining both the ways of understanding tradition and projecting possible future perspectives. The modification of coordinates stems first and foremost from the evolution of the political reality, which contributes to redefining previously binding truths. This modification is moreover underpinned by transformations within rhetorical systems, which primarily provide an evaluative account of reality and thus construct the set of national images. As a result, the narrative of the history of nineteenth-century revivalists gains the form of pre-established narrative patterns, which pre-determine the strategies of event ordering and indicate the directions of their valuation (Šmahelová 19).

Direct proof of the above persistence can be found in postmodern literature, which after 1989 willingly takes up the subject of the National Revival. Such revisions of the past are most often neither simple nor easy. They are often accompanied by historiosophic reflection,

stressing the merits of nineteenth-century *vlastenec* (patriots) and often making accusations or revisions of the accomplishments of the major representatives of the Czech emancipation movement. Milan Kundera pulled no punches when, while looking back on the events of August 1968, he included them into the tradition of reflection on Czech identity: "I often thought in those days about the Czech National Revival which, in the middle of feverish Europe, floundered atop its own small pile of sand, a Revival that rapped Mácha's knuckles with its pedant's ruler, a Revival incapable of forging values relevant to greater humankind, a Revival filled with trifling acts and devoid of great deeds. I thought of the legacy of this small mentality that has left its imprint even on the Czech twentieth century" (Kundera 3). Josef Jedlička speaks in a similar manner, but offers a less scathing judgment in his series of essays, where he tries to reconstruct a model of a Czech literary protagonist, exemplifying patterns of collectively respected values. In an introduction to his reflections, the author admits as follows: *Ať už dáme tomu předznamenání znamení kladné nebo záporné, faktem zůstane, že česká kulturní tradice, a tedy ani česká literatura nemá skutečného hrdinu. (...) Už naši obrozenci z toho měli pocit méněcennosti a těžkou hlavu. (...) Připadalo jim, že i my máme právo na své Nibelungy či na české "chansons de geste", a když nenašli při nejlepším vůli po hrdinských zpěvech ani stopy, sestrojili k všeobecnému užitku Záboje, Slavoje, Zbyhoně a ještě asi půl tuctů národních reků* (Jedlička 9). The scholar transfers the entire question from the realm of political diagnoses onto the surface of literary discourse, referring to the cultural role of literature, much stronger in Bohemia than in other countries. At the beginning of the National Revival, literature not only described or codified, but sometimes completely replaced all the other forms of life of the community in the process of consolidation.

Jedlička, recalling nineteenth-century literary forgeries, refers to one of the major Czech foundation myths, i.e. to the 1817 "discovery" made by Václav Hanka of two allegedly medieval manuscripts (*Královédvorský rukopis; Zelenohorský Rukopis*) with excerpts of Old Czech epic and lyrical poetry. Faith in the authenticity of the texts, which were in fact meticulously forged palimpsests (in terms of execution technique), imitating masterfully and in line with the then current medieval scholarship Russian, Serb and West European heroic songs, was for a long time treated as the yardstick and litmus paper of patriotic feelings (Macura 1995: 109–111; Nawrocki 38). The forgery was

unmasked only in the 1880s amidst heated disputes where, as Miloš Urban highlights: *Obě strany problém pravosti důsledně politizovaly. Obhájcí vášnivě argumentovali národními zájmy a nezřídka sklouzli do nacionálně šovinistických pozic. Odpůrci apelovali o rozum a objektivitu, šlo jim o dobré jméno české vědy za hranicemi; nevíra v Rukopisy byla pro ně známkou pokrokovosti* (Urban 1998: 19). The above observation is quoted after a 1998 novel *Poslední tečka za rukopisy*, where the writer unleashes scathing criticism of the illusion of authenticity of the manuscripts, which is incidentally upheld in some circles, and ironically addresses the recent fad of the literary pseudo-factual. The latter, based on little confirmed facts and hypotheses, skilfully tampers with the lacunae of historical knowledge. Combining reliable conclusions with less or more probable conjecture as well as fabricating documents, Urban proposes here an alternative history of the Czech National Revival, where the superimposed layers of mystification on the one hand blur the reality of historical events and on the other hand lay bare the questionable character of historical interpretation. The quasi-scientific nature of extensive excerpts of the novel, the absurd conclusions of its two protagonists, who happen to be scholars in the Institute of Czech Literature of Prague University, acquires a semblance of authenticity (naturally, within the fictional world of the book), and the eponymous “last word” concerning the manuscripts becomes a word with a power to create reality:

Prohlašujeme, že jmenované rukopisy jsou skutečnými památkami krásného písemnictví středověkých Čech. (...) Desítky generací znaly ony dvě osoby nejtěsněji spjaté s Rukopisem královédvorským a Rukopisem zelenohorským, jejich údajné padělatele, pod jmény Václav Hanka a Josef Linda. Naše habilitační práce tento omyl vyvrací. Hanka a Linda neexistovali. Hanka a Linda existovaly. Jmenovaly se Hannelore Vierteilová a Linda Janovitzová (Urban 1998: 189–190, 191)

A clear inclusion of the “manuscript mystery” into the gender discourse, confirmed by a totally spurious “involvement” into a meticulously designed plot of major women of letters of the Czech National Revival, i.e. Magdalena Dobromila Rettigová and the unfavourably presented Božena Němcová, ultimately pokes fun at all the conspiracy theories of excessive exegetic interference into the matter of history¹.

¹ In the text *Urodzić naród. Z problematyki czeskiej i słowackiej literatury kobiecej II połowy XIX wieku* [To give birth to a nation. Questions of Czech and Slovak women’s literature of

In his later novels (*Sedmikostelí*, 1999; *Hastrman*, 2001; *Pole i palisáda*, 2006), Urban revisits the individual components of a mythology codified in the ideological order of the Czech National Revival in order to scrutinise them and open up avenues of their “heretical” interpretations. Especially in the first of the three novels, published in Poland under the title *Klątwa siedmiu kościołów*, describing in a utopian convention a full restitution in Prague of the principles and living condition from pre-Hussite Middle Ages, the narrator, a medieval scholar and proponent of history which evokes the everyday, observes in his theoretical comments:

Barbarství armád nikdy nezklame – ve všech dobách má podobnou tvář. Vojsko se v servitském klášteře Na Slupi usadilo už koncem století osmnáctého, poté, co byl na příkaz císaře Josefa zrušen. Posádka dělostřelců a chovanci vzdělavacího ústavu Kinského a Kallenbergova pluku řádili v odsvěceném kostele jako v dobytém území nepřítele: (...). Ale co to bylo proti podzimu 1420, kdy odsud, přímo z chrámu Páně, stříleli husité na Vyšehrad! (Urban 1999: 133–134)

The first part of this statement fully corresponds to the traditional reflection on valuating historical events, stereotypically ascribing a destructive role to the Germanic element (in this case Austrian troops). Its second part, however, radically departs from the kind of thinking rooted in collective memory and recalls the consistently blocked from this memory the Hussite rebellions, so destructive for the existence of the Czech nation. A conclusion which stems from these reflections seems in effect not only surprising, but also blasphemous, as it lashes at the convictions that are the most deeply rooted in collective memory. However, contrary to what it seems, Urban’s assessment is no different from that of twentieth-century historians, who no longer shy away from indicating the consequences of Hussite’s iconoclasm, disastrous for Czech culture (both spiritual and tangible). In this case, then, Urban questions in the first place the set of socially ingrained stereotypical beliefs, an inspiration for literature, which sometimes follows them blindly and unreservedly, on other

the second half of the 19th c.], Marcin Filipowicz reflects, for instance, on the risks connected with applying today’s “feminist approach” to nineteenth-century women writers. As he observes, *Similar attempts [...] made [...] by scholars, are schematic and limited to defining a woman writer as the first Czech feminist, a warrior of feminism, etc. Such statements are not corroborated by any in-depth analysis, which would involve the assumptions of feminist literary criticism. [...] Such an a priori recognition of Němcova as a feminist is a gross overstatement and becomes part of criticism which can be defined as feminist social realism* (Filipowicz 18–19).

occasions making them an object of demystification processes and a tool for questioning the national mythology and its pivotal axioms and for proposing novel solutions in this respect.

Furthermore, Czech writers who, since the National Revival, were accustomed to play the roles of spiritual leaders and teachers of the nation found it difficult to get accustomed to the loss of this privileged following the 1989 political transformations. It was then that their role was degraded to that of providers of disinterested and playful entertainment. Jiří Kratochvíl, the only Czech prose writer to openly admit adhering to postmodernism, maintains that the features of this lost privilege can be found in the resignation (forced out and not fully accepted) of non-artistic tasks, which previously determined the significance of literature in Czech society, but stresses that this loss is offset by gaining a complete and uncontrolled creation power, activating the patterns of individual mythopoetic activity (Kratochvíl 84). In the case of Macura, Urban and Daniela Hodrová, however, this private mythology takes into account also previous mythical constructs, comprising the stock images of the National Revival and provoking public opinion. References to the Revival motifs and stereotypes are after all one of the stock repertory of Czech postmodernist playing with history, deliberately undermining established beliefs and manners of their literary representation.

In the 1990s, in the novel tetralogy titled *Ten, který bude* (1999), Macura transposed the results of his studies into the world of literary fiction, carrying out an experiment and verifying the viability of his semiological conclusions in the practice of everyday life of the Revival representatives. He lays bare the particular and very often mundane motivation of the seemingly noble and patriotic aims. Moreover, he demonstrates with the use of numerous examples of peoples' lives how the initial enthusiasm or curiosity and the will to get to know the patriotic community transform into disillusionment or lack of interest. Instead of legendary "martyrs for the national cause", the reader received portraits of schemers and life's total failures. The second group included dogmatic fanatics, who are decisively opposed to any other viewpoints, while the third one (as in the last volume of the series titled *Medicus*) focuses on madmen whose troubled minds give birth to foundations of alternative history. In the first part of the tetralogy (*Informator*), the protagonist, a failed member of the intelligentsia, forced to be an agent of Austrian police, arrives in Prague hoping to regain his social

position and to gain the love of Antonia Rajska (1817–1852), one of the major activists of the national movement. His encounter with the city, often shown in Revival literature as a “rite of passage to the Czech faith”, fails to produce the expected epiphany. Instead of a vibrant and robust metropolis that addresses the challenges of the time, the protagonist, who copies in his thinking the semiological conclusions of the novel’s author, finds within the city walls only traces and signs of old-forgotten glory, with no correspondence to the current time (Macura 1999: 36, 38–39). This attack on one of the primary emblems of Czech identity – a city transformed into an allegory – is coupled with the questioning of the entire conglomerate of symbols characteristic of the Czech National Revival. The protagonist of the *Informator* does not gain the author’s approval, but it is his point of view which dominated over the others present in the novel and it is this point of view that is ultimately decisive which ideas and interpretative conclusions will reach out to the reader. It is up to the readers, equipped with stereotypical knowledge and trite beliefs, whether they will accept the potential of the “alternative proposal” and agree to reinterpret the most influential period of Czech history, or whether they will stick to their guns and see the protagonist as a spineless opportunist and traitor.

Daniela Hodrová performs a similar deconstruction of the Revival myths in her novel *Podobojí* (1999), where a thematised reflection on Czech national history is inscribed into a convoluted plot depicting the duality of being, where all living forms acquire their *pendant* in the world after death. Ontological reflection is supplemented by a historical one, and the situation of eternal existence, unique because it is stripped of metaphysical justification, makes the historical events of the past prefigure those of the events of the future, where the past returns in a degraded and oftentimes caricature form:

Obrodný proces na Olšanském hřbitově pokračuje (...). Pan Klečka, jak se tak ve dne potuluje mezi hroby, nachází jeho další a další neklamně známky. Všimne si, že pan Šafařík se začal shánět po panu Palackém (kampak se poděl otec národa?) a mluví cosi o vládě bodáků a špěhů, která do hrobu klesá. Pan Kollár teskní po Míně, i když dávno spí po jeho boku, a pan Jungmann vede na hrobech rozmlouvání o jazyce českém. A všude kolem vzniká plno hřbitovní poezie. A pan Klečka z toho pochopí, že zase začíná národní obrození. A jednoho dne potká pana Havlíčka, který se něčemu ironicky usmívá. (Hodorová 83)²

² This statement refers to the political “thaw” period of the 1960s. In a similar way, the novel signals the events of August 1968: Pan Klečka se jde jednou za letní noci jako

The cemetery in Olšany, the most well-known national shrine, belongs in the world of Hodrová's novel to a uniquely exposed ontological indeterminacy. It is this cemetery that witnesses the intermingling of all kinds of being and it is here that the "ordinary" residents of the twentieth-century world might coexist on equal terms with the legendary representatives of the National Revival who, in the shackles of their own biographies, cannot come to terms with the new historical situation, regarding it through the prism of the Revivalist mythology. However, as follows from the reflections included in the novel, this mythology, not losing its legitimacy, has its "dark sides" too, the "spaces of *podobojí*", where previously unquestioned unequivocal statements clash with the ambivalence and relativity of a perception born with the passage of time and the acquisition of knowledge of historical transformations. A remembrance of the "black legend" of the awakeners, the history of "betrayal" and collaboration of the Romantic poet, Karl Sabina, one of the inhabitants of the cemetery, is for example an accusation of the entire National Revival. It allowed its leaders "to die of starvation" (which really happened to Božena Němcová and the author of the Czech national anthem Josef Kajetán Tyl), only to be later – depending on the political situation – or in an act of belated expiation buried with honours (in the case of Němcová and Tyl), or to criticise their difficult life choices, made under the impact of the current circumstances. As a result, Hodrová overtly ascribes this tendency to the duality of approaches of the Czech nation, seen as an ideological construct developed due to the appropriately prepared historical memory and commonplace experience of community members, often forced to meander between respect of ethical imperatives and the necessity to live within the political and social conditions of the time:

Jsem národ. Upadl jsem v nové egyptské zajetí. Vyznávám víru podobojí, přijímám tělo a krev Paně. (...) Mám své revoluce a své hrdiny. Jeden z nich vyzplál na hranici, kterou si sám navršil – mezi Národním muzeem a Domem po-

obvykle nadechnout hřbitovního vzduchu. A zase potká pana Havlíčka. Pan Havlíček se tentokrát už neusmívá a ke všemu pana Klečku neočekávaně osloví. Dokonce mu řekne příteli a že je zle (...). Hůře bude než zle. Pan Havlíček totiž tuší, že co nevidět přitáhne Windischgrätz, v Praze se zase budou stavět barikády... A dokonce se panu Havlíčkovi zdá, že už slyší dunět zem pod Windischgrätzovou artilerií. A vyzve pana Klečku, aby přiložil ucho k zemi a poslechl, jestli už nejedou. Pan Klečka přiloží ucho k olšanské zemi a poslouchá. A opravdu slyší, jak země duní, jako by se dole měla rozevřít propast, Jan Paskal by řekl Gehenna. (Hodrová 91-92).

travin. (...) Jsem národ vystřízlivělý ze svých revolucí a svých zápalných obětí. Jsem národ, který konvertoval. (Hodrová 104)

A nation which has betrayed the ideals informing the process leading to its emancipation does not deserve protection of a commonly respected myth. Therefore, perhaps, Hodrová ironically reevaluates the particular components of Czech mythology, for instance the legend about the knights sleeping in Mount Blaník, proving the inadequacy of the myth in the current situation³. However, even a nation which has undergone a conversion and lost its initial faith needs to take root in permanent and immutable spaces organised according to the myth order. As Leszek Kołakowski proves: *The inheritance of myths is the inheritance of values the myths impose. Thus, coherence of human coexistence demands that tradition as such – and not just because in the past it had been judged a good tradition – should radiate authority. But from this it does not yet follow that the values of myth are wholly immanent in relation to those values which myth transmits and which human societies require. Nor does it follow that one should worship tradition unreservedly. Particular traditions stay alive or lose their force and wither, depending on a variety of conditions; they live and die like human beings.* (Kołakowski 7–8) Czech writers, then, often make use of national myths, if sometimes in a degraded, ridiculed or subversive form, since they continue to operate in the collective stock of images and have a permanent impact on the construction of individual and collective identity.

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THE ORIENT IN POSTWAR POLISH CINEMA: RECONNAISSANCE

One could venture an observation that, unlike other literary and cultural periods such as Romanticism and Modernism (interwar period), the postwar period in Polish cinema suffers from a paucity of oriental themes, Middle Eastern (broadly: Arabic) and especially Far Eastern. It is difficult to pinpoint any other possible cause of this fact apart from the very obvious one, namely that Poland had been cut off from much of the world during the Polish People's Republic. This explanation is all the more feasible, seeing that after 1989, along with the political transformation, came a discernable increase in representations of the Orient. However, instead of searching for reasons and explanations, perhaps it is better to consider exactly what kind of representations of the Eastern and Arabic world one can find in these works, e.g. **in the context of such notions and phenomena as exoticism, postcolonialism, orientalism or the clash of cultures**. How does our cinema represent those cultures and our confrontations with them when someone from Poland goes to their land and in the case when oriental culture finds its way to us?

The West-East/Orient is always first depicted in terms of a spatial and then temporal opposition, both of which can be complementary. The language of space can express the world of values. It has always been the case that both literature and art tend to enter into the domain of myth. However, art has also developed discernable measures

which neutralize the mythic dimension of the West-East relation. It is important to notice how Polish cinema treats, i.e. narrativizes, the aforementioned opposition. **Is the Orient only a narrative space in this opposition, or is it, to a certain extent, a social space, a discourse which tells us something about Polish reality?**

I. The Exoticism of the East

Without a doubt, the dominant image of the Orient in postwar Polish cinema is one of exotic space, full of adventure and fantasy, a space that is different, strange, and distant, culturally and geographically, from our everyday environment. Sometimes, this image is presented within a historical perspective, e.g. in such films as *Colonel Wolodyjowski* (Jerzy Hoffman 1969), *In Desert and Wilderness*, especially in the first adaptation from 1973 by Władysław Ślesicki, and *The Golden Mahmudia* (1987 Kazimierz Tarnas). To that list one might add stories in which the East (also the so-called Near East, Arabic) is a place of action and adventure, as in Marek Piestrak's *Curse of Snakes Valley* (1988), where a part of the plot takes place on the Laos/Vietnam border, *Operation Simoom* (1999 Władysław Pasikowski), which takes place in Iraq, or the aforementioned *The Golden Mahmudia*, which takes place in Bulgaria near the Black Sea, though the story deals with the Turkish occupation of this region from centuries back. It would seem that for many years (approximately after the 1990s), these were the kind of images one found of places containing certain **elements of the Orient. They tended to take the form of stereotypes rooted in pop culture. These images, as well as the whole cinematic universe, are highly stylized**, which is something that can be seen both in movies obviously meant for entertainment and commercial purposes as well as in independent films of the greats. *The Manuscript Found in Saragossa* by Wojciech J. Has is a case in point. In this movie we see Emina (Iga Cembrzyńska) and Zibelda (Joanna Jędryka), the Muslim cousins of the main character, van Worden (Zbigniew Cybulski), who attempt to convert him to Islam, but are depicted as representations of Oriental erotic temptation, not as horrible succubas. Similarly, the Sheikh of the Gomelez (Kazimierz Opaliński) is more likely to prompt laughter in the viewer than faith in his might. The same tendency can be noticed with other characters in the film, whose exoticism is evoked by

inscribing them seamlessly into the phantasmagoric, surrealist scenography, which helps build the Arabian atmosphere, full of irony, playfulness and adventure, following Jan Potocki, who used in his novel the structure of *One Thousand and One Nights*. As far as this type of character is concerned, it is worth remembering that there is a comic book dimension of Andrzej Kondratiuk's *Hydro Puzzle* (1970) represented in the form of the grotesque protagonist – the Maharaja of Kabur, played by Roman Kłosowski. This character brings to the film elements of eastern orientalism, though in a rather comic tone, brought about partly by the actor himself, whose previous work draws association with plebian characters and whose face does not correspond to our image of an Arabic prince. In this way the exotic character not only introduces an oriental-fantastic element into the presented space, but also attempts to emphasize its own artificiality, conventionality and, in a word, its arbitrariness in a distinctly stylized world, immersed as it is in a comic book pedigree.

Far Eastern (i.e. exotic) land has also been represented as a possible destination of our insurgents and fugitives. This is the case in Jacek Bromski's *Love in the Year of the Tiger* (2005), which depicts a Polish officer in 1913–1914 who escapes a Siberian prison in Manchuria and is later taken in by a Chinese peasant family. There he experiences a forbidden love with a young Chinese woman, the daughter of the Chinese family. The film's environment is, unfortunately, drawn with a broad brush, replete with stereotypical images, evoking all too easily the exoticism of the surroundings: snow. A similar characteristic can be found in another film which takes place at the beginning of the twentieth century also in Manchuria, *The End of the World* (1999) by Magdalena Łazarkiewicz. This Russian/Chinese borderland is where the Russians are building a railway and it is where Polish exiles have been sent by the force of history to do hard labor. This melodramatic story is subordinated to its scenery to such a degree that one might ask whether it was not merely an excuse to locate it in such a distant place. What is important is that the Siberia depicted in both these films has become increasingly more Asian, Far Eastern, i.e. mysterious, dangerous and domineering and to a lesser degree tied to Russian culture.

Curse of Snakes Valley, a Polish/Russian coproduction from the late 1980s, written by Marek Piestrak, occupies a separate place among movies focusing on exoticism. Adapted from Robert Stratton's novel,

the film preserves the novel's setting, placing the story in various periods, going sometimes as far back as the Indo-China War from the 1950s. Most importantly, the director is attempting to emulate Steven Spielberg's *Indiana Jones*. Unfortunately, in his attempt to follow in the footsteps of *Raiders of the Lost Arc*, Piestrak, failing to employ pastiche or at least parody, instead resorts to direct imitation.

Exotic places, mysterious events, often drawn from the past (see also: *The Golden Mahmudia*), as well as action and adventure plots, have all too often led our filmmakers astray. We could add that **Polish cinema has managed to tame this exotic mystery by making use of familiar images**, far removed from the pretensions held by the West to supervise less developed cultures, understood by researchers of orientalism as the great Western narrative. Instead of this, these films present **picture-postcard places with an exotic stamp**. What is important here is the changing story and backdrop with the type of egotism being completely interchangeable. These films are based on stereotypes which draw on that type of knowledge held by the viewers. This is clearly visible in some sitcoms, e.g. *Zmiennicy (Subs)* (Stanisław Bereja 1986). One of the supporting, albeit important, characters is Kraszan Bhamarandzaga (Piotr Pręgowski), a Siamese (Thai) student at the Polytechnics in Poland. This character, who speaks in comically broken Polish, is a mafia liaison embroiled in the drug trade between Asia and Poland. It would seem that he embodies the satirical image of the usually rich or industrious foreigners living in the poor but otherwise streetwise Poland of the 1980s. The character of the Easterner created by our cinema is perhaps a more interesting and slightly more complex character, though nonetheless based on stereotypes.

II. Intruder and enemy from the East

A foreigner, a person from the East is often an enemy or a traitor. At least that is the image portrayed in the adaptation of Henryk Sienkiewicz's *Colonel Wolodyjowski* (dir. Jerzy Hoffman 1969) and *With Fire and Sword* (dir. Jerzy Hoffman 1999); it is also an image to be found in the adaptation of Witkacy's *Insatiability* (dir. Wiktor Grodecki 2003) and *Operation Simoom* (1999), based on Władysław Pasikowski's series. Cinema which draws on Sienkiewicz's tradition is unable to

liberate itself from the stereotypical image ascribed to people from the East, who are often depicted as wild, dangerous, but also fascinating in their physical, cultural and mental otherness. This is especially visible in *Colonel Wolodyjowski*, where the most fascinating character is Azja Tuhajbejowicz (son of the Tatar, Tuhaj-bej known from the novel and film adaptation, *With Fire and Sword*) played by Daniel Olbrychski. Wild, passionate, aggressive, deceptive and deceived, he enlisted in the Turkish army which was at that time marching for Europe. This depiction yields an image of a man who is brutal, uncompromising and vindictive, someone who still has Asian blood running through his veins, despite all his experiences in Poland. This is a man who is authentically fascinated by Polish women but is rejected by them on account of his race. The adaptation of this work is reminiscent of the way other parts of the *Trilogy* had been adapted for the screen. The viewer was to have the easiest possible task. Rafał Marszałek, discussing the adaptation of *Colonel Wolodyjowski*, wrote:

The generic diversity rooted in the novel lends itself well to a film adaptation. Hoffman combined the elements of a romance with elements of action-adventure in a cloak and dagger convention. The chivalric saga tone gave the story seriousness; the symbolic content, though coupled only with military matters, were all the more visible in the film. The author's emphasis on descriptions and the film's well-paced plot contributed to the ease and pervasiveness of the films reception. (Marszałek 1994: 70).

The same characteristics can be found in the adaptation of *With Fire and Sword*. The image of the Orient knocking on the gates of Western civilization is here different from the one found in *Colonel Wolodyjowski*, as it is less individualized and more reminiscent of a colorful goblin pieced together from many characters representing the court of the Crimean Khan, Islam III Giray (Adam Ferency). The leader of the Crimean Tatars stands out from this crowd, as well as his trusted Tuhaj-bej (Daniel Olbrychski), once again depicted as being dangerous and brave to the point of madness like Azja in *Colonel Wolodyjowski* (where the actor years earlier played the character's descendent). The khan usually appears in this film in the presence of his court – people living in the lap of luxury, fiery, full of expressive gestures and glances, wearing colorful makeup and clothes, and all cast in a decadent spirit in an erotic context quite distant from Sienkiewicz's novel. Khan

is seen fondling a beautiful transvestite sitting by his side, which is a visible sign not only of his otherness but also his decay and the impending fall of the Eastern horde. That is, the enemy is not only cruel and deceptive (like in the roles portrayed by Olbrychski) but is also completely disparate in his erotic preferences.

Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz's *Insatiability*, published in 1930, presents yet another type of enemy from the East knocking on the gates of Poland and Europe. Wiktor Grodecki wrote and directed adaptation, employing in it elements of the grotesque to depict the Western world of 1997, a world in danger of being consumed by Chinese pan-communism, against which only Poland is still putting up a fight. Michał Jakubik, who played Wang Tang, the Mandarin leader and main ideologue of the Chinese, inscribed himself well into this convention. In *Insatiability* the threat of Eastern totalitarization is personified, on the one hand, by the stereotypically stylized image of "a Chinese Mandarin" in terms of his external characteristics (appropriate clothes, haircut, etc.) and, on the other, by grotesque behavior, e.g. yelling out strange sounds. Apart from that, Wang is also characterized by the cunning, sadistic, domineering manner with which he treats his own people and Poles, as well as by cruelty, a trait stereotypically ascribed to people from the Far East.

In turn, Pasikowski's *Operation Simoom* places the enemy in the Near East, specifically in Iraq. Polish cinema rarely ventures off to this region of the world, though this is recently beginning to change. In the eponymous mission in 1990 Polish special forces helped to extract a few American spies from Iraq. The political relevance and suspense of the action sequences portrayed in the film are undercut by the fact that the Iraqi soldiers and policemen are completely powerless to deal with the Polish commandoes. The Iraqis are a weak and anonymous enemy, as if unworthy of a more nuanced psychological portrayal; they are a collective opponent that is easily fooled, despite the reputation of their dangerous leader - Saddam Hussein. The film depicts shrewd Poles outmaneuvering their enemy at every turn; these enemies not only by virtue of alliances but, or perhaps also, by virtue of personal reasons: one of the characters has to rescue his son from an Iraqi prison after he finds himself there because of inappropriate acquaintances. In all, the battle is rather an adventure in an exotic environment, which compels us to return to the influence of Henryk Sienkiewicz on Polish cinema. In this regard, his novel *In Desert and*

Wilderness and its two film adaptations play an important role, as they raise questions related to the presence and development of the colonial stance as well as its later modifications. Although, of course, the story takes place in Africa, not in the Near East or Asia, the image of Arabs, as they are depicted in those novels, is characteristic for those geo-cultural areas.

Returning to Sienkiewicz and his *In Desert and Wilderness*, we can observe in this work an aversion towards Arabs and the construction of a defined negative representation of another race. For instance, let us turn our attention to the negative representation of the Mahdi (Messiah) and his fellow tribesmen. We know today that the Mahdist War in Sudan was part of the independence struggle (1881–84, 1899 – local forces were eventually quelled by Anglo-Egyptian forces), though not without religious fanaticism. To some extent we should agree with the fact that, generally speaking, this perspective on the Other is rooted in a certain area of Polish literature permeated with colonial ideology, e.g. the *Adventures of Tomek* series written by Alfred Szklarski, even though paradoxically it originated in a country that did not possess colonies. Furthermore, we can make the following claim, in line with Edward W. Said's thesis included in *Orientalism*:

Therefore as much as the West itself, The Orient is an idea that has a history and a tradition of thought, imagery, and vocabulary that have given it reality and presence in and for the West. The two geographical entities thus support and to an extent reflect each other. (Said 1977: 5)

The East in Polish cinema is, similarly as in the Orientalist discourse, an invention, and a fiction, in this case a fiction created, to a large extent, by Sienkiewicz and his adaptors, and as such should not be construed as an objective, neutral representation of reality and its representatives. The dominant feature of this representation is a fantasy concerning the threat from the East, which has to be eliminated here or there (*Operation Simoom*, *Mission Afghanistan*). **This thinking coincides with a colonial perspective, which can be seen on the example of two adaptations of *In Desert and Wilderness*, were in the first, by Władysław Ślesicki, we can find echoes of the following opinion:**

Neither imperialism nor colonialism is a simple act of accumulation and acquisition. Both are supported and perhaps even impelled by impressive ideological formations that include nations that certain territories and people require and

beseech domination, as well as forms of knowledge affiliated with domination. (Said 1994: 9)

In the first adaptation of Sienkiewicz's novel, the Mahdi and other Arabs are represented as people resorting to violence as a means of achieving their military and political aims: they are ready to imprison children who came from other parts of the world, in this case Staś and Nell, who, in turn, represent courage and determination that no one would expect of them. Only with Gavin Hood's adaptation of Sienkiewicz's novel did this perspective give way to a more developed and balanced depiction of Whites – Arabs – Blacks in Africa, which was earlier presented by the Polish author, and then both filmmakers. As Michał Rogoź noticed, in Hood's film the main characters are not Staś and Nell, but Africans – Kali and Mea, who embody African wisdom (Rogoź 2012: 516).

Moreover, we have to agree with Rogoź in yet another matter: Africa is presented in this work as heaven on earth and not as a place of adventure and war. This way Hood reverses the proportions of how this continent had been represented by his predecessor by shifting attention to the black natives and also, which is key, by minimally accentuating Arab violence connected with their struggle for independence. However, for this to happen the director had to be an African. Incidentally, this directing job was fortuitous, because the previous director, Maciej Dudkiewicz, fell ill and was persuaded by the producer, Waldemar Dziki, to find a replacement.

III. Taming the Other

In recent years, an important and a frequent perspective on how someone from the East functions in contact with Poles or, what is even more interesting, in contemporary Poland. **Often, it is no longer the enemy but the Other who slowly becomes familiar and with some difficulties is eventually tamed**, also through love. This is the situation we find in, e.g. the Polish-Swedish film by Agnieszka Łukasik, *Between Two Fires* (2010). After escaping from a Belarusian mafia operating a child trafficking ring, a Polish woman makes her way to a refugee camp, where she gets involved in a difficult love affair with an Algerian fugitive, and encounters obstacles of an action-adventure variety. Love gives both protagonists their desired meaning in life

and is also something that is sought and found by characters from the previously mentioned films, which take place in Manchuria. It is interesting, however, to turn our attention to the Other from the East, who gains experience in contact with contemporary Poland. Three films are especially telling in this regard, as they portray this problem in different conventions, which are: comedic as in *Extras* (2006 Michał Kwiecinski), drama and thriller as in *My Flesh My Blood* (2009 Marcin Wrona), and independent/poetic as is the case with *Essential Killing* (Jerzy Skolimowski 2010), an international coproduction including Poland.

Extras is an example of a film within a film. A Chinese film crew comes to Poland in search of extras with somber faces (they heard that in Poland they will find plenty of such people) for a bleak melodrama they are filming. For this purpose they chose a small, provincial town of Konin and its residents. The volunteers are comprised of ordinary, common people, often with difficult pasts, for example Bożena (Kinga Preis), who was abandoned a few years ago by her fiancé when she was with child. She made up for her unsuccessful private life by learning Chinese, which has now proven useful during the casting. However, contrary to the expectations and assumptions of the film crew, these ordinary people begin to shine and come alive on the set of the film. In time the Chinese film crew begin to appreciate Polish hospitality and particularly the Polish fondness for feasting, and the Poles in turn begin to discover in their guests something else than slant-eyed characters from some martial arts film screaming at one another incomprehensibly. Stereotypes and communication difficulties are partially overcome in accord with the conventions of a situational comedy; however, these conventions are also the basis for the comedy. The film's conclusions are, therefore, obvious: Poland is not only a good place for a film location and the exotic Chinese are just like any other nation in their universal human reactions and needs. There is nothing in this film that would suggest a clash of civilizations, whose drama and finality were described by Samuel Huntington; it is replaced by familiar and homey images, which eliminate the exoticism and the otherness of the Other. However, it is also the case that our cinema describes these contacts in a more dramatic way, as testified above by *My Flesh My Blood* and *Essential Killing*.

In Marcin Wrona's feature-length debut, *My Flesh My Blood*, a known boxer (Eryk Lubos), after learning of his terminal illness,

decides to leave behind something meaningful – a new life, and so he sets off to find a woman that would provide him with an offspring. He happens to come across a young Vietnamese woman (Luu De Ly), who is illegally working in Warsaw. As a representative of Warsaw's Vietnamese community centered around the 10th Anniversary Stadium and also as a young woman, her social status is precarious, a fact that our protagonist takes advantage of for his own aims. His male chauvinism, which prompts him to treat this woman as an object for sexual and procreational fulfillment, also leads him to treat her as someone weaker by virtue of her race and her lack of access to the rights and privileges he enjoys. Her Otherness in this regard defines her weaker position. This initial situation changes, as with time Yen Ha begins to capture more lodgments in this "sex war" (and culture war), becoming increasingly more aware of how much she is needed by this man. The end of the film, however, reasserts – to a certain extent – the dominance of the white male, who before his death entrusts Yen Ha to his friend, who is to take care of her and his child. This is an arrangement agreed upon by both parties. Katarzyna Klimkiewicz's half-hour long *Hanoi-Warszawa* (2010) depicts the Vietnamese community in a similar, although less brutal, way. This film presents the Vietnamese as an invisible minority, which has to serve and remain anonymous in their numbers. A Polish woman is indifferent towards this mass, though any Polish-Vietnamese emotional relations are seen every time as an exception to this attitude. *My Flesh My Blood* also proves that although stereotypical ideas of an inferior race and inferior sex are still very much alive in Poland, these stereotypes can be undermined by the mere presence of people who are representatives of these stereotypes. Their patient presence gradually leads towards reconciliation, though this process seems to take a long time.

The plight of an Asian immigrant in our country is most dramatically represented in Jerzy Skolimowski's film (even though the Polish setting is inferred). In *Essential Killing* we follow Mohammed (Vincent Gallo), who is either a Taliban member connected to terrorism or merely an ordinary and unjustly imprisoned Muslim, as he escapes from a secret American base in Central Europe (Poland?). Besieged from all sides, he is ready to go to any lengths to survive, but, on the other hand, it is precisely in those conditions that he is able to find selfless help. Skolimowski presents this clash of two worlds and two civiliza-

tions by way of paradoxes. The fugitive, in this case the main character with the camera following his every step, does not utter one word, and his motivation is presented as being solely physical and biological. He learns of this motivation from his environment by means of the dynamic action. We never discover any deeper motivation related to his past. He is alone and cornered, and also extremely dangerous. The military machine which has been deployed against him is anonymous and disproportionately large. In such conditions, anyone would give in, turned to a hunted animal. On the other hand, as I have indicated earlier, the audience might see in him a human and will endow him with the humanity that he is denied by the world. **What is significant is that the Other in dramatic films does not speak, does not verbalize his or her desires and dreams; it can only communicate with gestures and facial expressions** (like the female character in *My Flesh My Blood*, who is for the male protagonist the embodiment of passivity and subservience, the object of erotic desire, and the embodiment of male imperial fantasies) or with pure activity (like Muhammad escaping in Skolimowski's film). There is also the image of Afghanistan full of Taliban and NATO soldiers from the television show *Misja Afganistan (Mission Afghanistan)*. Maciej Dejczner, the director of this show, attempts to be completely neutral as he realistically depicts war. There are ordinary, good Afghans, even cooperating with the army, but there are also those who ambush and destroy convoys. Dejczner does not avoid the most difficult topic: the possibility of civilians being killed by Western military forces, including Polish forces. This distant war is presented as a confrontation of vague and ambiguous arguments and positions, something that is best observed in the doubts, breakdowns and mistakes made by our soldiers.

Taking into consideration the still small number of Polish films portraying the Orient and its representatives, **it is impossible to see in any of them indications of "a clash of civilizations" in Samuel Huntington's understanding, i.e. a geopolitical concept that assumes a radical contradistinction between Western civilization and others** (nota bene, this is a term that has come under criticism from, among others, Edward W. Said for its racism and colonialism *par excellence*). Even though most films belong to the second group, which represent Asians, Arabs or Muslims as enemies, this situation is slowly beginning to change. On the whole, many films deal with the

process of defining their own stance and identity in relation toward the Oriental Other. These are constructed, to a large extent, on the Same/Other opposition, expressed by means of a historical/action-adventure narrative or, in newer works, by action-drama, where it is possible to observe another image of this relation by discerning in the foreigner an Other who is now the object of the camera's interest and respect. **To this day Polish cinema has not widened its space of understanding, though filmmakers are certainly not against their Oriental characters; in fact, they are trying to evoke in the audience some kind of understanding, and even – quite often – empathy for these characters.** The question is whether the latter stance is also part of the imperial-colonial discourse? We should remember that no discourse represents reality neutrally and transparently, but works to ideologize it. We should notice that the problem of binary oppositions is gradually disappearing. In Poland this process is based on our history, economic development and geopolitical conditions, which have all rendered inclusion, obviously symbolic in any of these universes, changeable and unclear. We can see the reflection of this in our cinema also in regards to our relationship with the Orient.

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DERACINATION AND ROOTEDNESS. THE DRAMA OF SHIFTING BORDERS IN POLISH CONTEMPORARY THEATRE

The phenomenon of the so-called „regained territories”, although it may inspire many a narrative, both at the time of the People’s Republic of Poland and many years since, has been mainly presented from the perspective approved by the authorities. This perspective, even if it has changed, has rarely led to a reorientation of the prevalent narrative model. In Polish theatre the situation changed around 2006, after Jan Klata’s direction of the postdramatic play *Transfer!* in Wrocław. Thanks to this performance, many people – not only theatre spectators and not only Poles – began to consider the topic of post-war displacement and re-settlement. From then on, the subject of deracination and rootedness has increasingly appeared in Polish theatre, depicted as part of a conscious policy of the state which was carried out in the past. The attention paid by writers as well as film and theatre authors to a topic removed from Polish historical discourse – of the Germans from Pomerania, Lubuskie, Prussia, and Lower Silesia – or people resettled within Operation Vistula, is just one example of the emergent postcolonial awareness of Polish artists.

The practice pursued by an increasing number of authors of Polish historical dramas is to break free of the tendencies traditionally prevailing in Polish historiography and to open the avenues it has overlooked. This phenomenon can be seen as a kind of deviation from

a kind of „historical amnesia”, in favour of „recovering” a multifaceted history (an ability to elaborate the forgotten memories, Gandhi 7–8). Some of the plays written and performed recently by playwrights such as Magda Fertacz (*Trash Story*), Sylwia Chutnik (*Murano*), Małgorzata Sikorska-Miszczuk (*Burmistrz [Mayor]*), Paweł Demirski (*Tykocin*, written with Michał Zadara), Bożena Keff (*Utwór o matce i ojczyźnie [A Piece about Mother and Homeland]*), Julia Holewińska (*Ciała obce [Foreign Bodies]*), and Tadeusz Słobodzianek (*Nasza klasa [Our Class]*) may be seen as contributions to a partial rejection of the „just right” vision of the past – usually adopting a homogeneous state perspective, i.e. in fact a national one; they give voice to the subjugated groups. The strength of the images persistent in public consciousness stems not only from their incessant reiteration, but also from the support given to them by the authorities and institutions dominant in Poland, most notably the Institute of National Remembrance. The general desire of theatre authors to dismantle the monolith of an unambiguous narrative of the past is nothing new: there were many excellent performances produced in communist Poland, especially by authors and directors such as Jerzy Jarocki, Andrzej Wajda, Konrad Swinarski, and Jerzy Grzegorzewski (Burzyńska 54). They were at odds, even if for obvious reasons not always overtly and directly, with the existing perception of the past as promoted by the regime. Outstanding directors were in opposition to the prevailing views and visions of the past, which were simultaneously established by theatrical institutions such as Television Theatre with its *Teatr Faktu* TV series (1963–1980) and the vast majority of institutional repertory theatres, subject to censorship and ideological cultural programming.

The close connection between the disseminated vision of history and the cultural policy of the regime of the People’s Republic of Poland led to the marginalization in narratives and dramas of the Others, i.e. those who did not fit in with the vision of a homogeneous nation state. Those absent (Jews and Roma, exterminated or forced to emigrate), those vanquished during the Second World War (inhabitants of East Prussia and other citizens of the Third Reich, living within former German borders, perceived by the prism of collective responsibility as Germans and as such clearly guilty of the war crimes), and finally marginalised ethnic and national groups (Silesians, Kashubs), as well as minorities deprived of their land (Lemka, Boykos, Do-

linians, or Ukrainians, relocated to the West) were ultimately deprived of their voice, which incidentally had never been fully given to them or sufficiently respected. In the first years of the People's Republic of Poland, in the cities which had until recently been German, a physical and symbolic acquisition of local theatres and establishment of new stages took place. Theatre contributed to the promotion by the authorities of the term „Regained Territories” and of a propaganda slogan about the „return to the homeland of the northern and western lands”.

Several years had to elapse since 1989 to effect a change in how artists addressed earlier historical relations. At first, the Others mentioned above appeared as shadows of the past, deprived of their own voice, triggering a nostalgia for what had been irrevocably gone. Although in the beginning of the nineties, ideas of significant ethnic diversity in the history of these areas appeared in different parts of Poland, their significance did not exceed the local (i.e. the cooperation of the theatres of Szczecin and Zielona Góra with German stages, the Bukovina Meetings Festival organized in northern Wielkopolska, related to the culture of displaced minorities or the establishment of the Silesian Korez Theatre in Katowice). Regardless of the political breakthrough, of the regained freedom and the rejection of censorship of the press, performances and other artistic activities, the groups marginalised by the Second World War continued to be excluded; those marginalized in the narratives and dramas of the People's Republic of Poland did not gain the right to speak at all.

Maintaining such a state of affairs as a kind of unintentional „thick line”, which eliminated some of the old and still abrasive problems concerning minorities, was possible by creatively addressing the demand of portraying the new political, social and economic reality, several years after 1989. The practice of setting new realistic conventions almost silenced repertory theatres with regard to the workings of memory and the need to verify the patterns of historical thinking. The themes of dominance, subordination and their historical background, present in the texts of the day, rarely implied opening up a debate; rather, their purpose was to confirm the dominant narrative model. The setting up of *Scena Faktu* [Fact Stage] on Polish Television is a perfect example of this tendency; this series in subsequent years increased in importance in the repertoire of the Television Theatre.

However, at the beginning of the 2006/2007 season, at the time when the Fact Stage was initiated, there were more and more theatrical performances after the political breakthrough in Poland, which supplemented, and sometimes even argued with, the vision of the past as promoted by the National Remembrance Institute (Polish IPN). Today, it seems that the opening of a new chapter linking culture and historical policy of the state provoked this reaction of the artists and influenced the broadening of the perspectives they adopted. Consciously, they tried to attract the attention of audiences and encourage them to a debate, seeking to open discourse not only to demographic and historical variability, but also to the practice of historiography. One of the first examples of such activities in theatre was the much-acclaimed play *Transfer!* by Jan Klata, staged at the Teatr Współczesny in Wrocław (premiere on Nov. 18. 2006). The aforementioned polemical tendency, which some commentators saw in this performance, was described by some as „historical populism” (Sieradzki) tantamount to „falsifying history” or a theatrical „falsehood” (Hałas). Others saw it as a testimony to the maturity of the generation unencumbered by the trauma of the war (and its communist vision), which began to speak in its own name and strove to „debunk history”¹. In its various incarnations, this practice is also described using other, parallel terms, which emphasize its chosen features: in an interview with Joanna Tokarska-Bakir, Weronika Szczawińska calls it a „memory, anti-amnesia turn” (Tokarska-Bakir, Szczawińska 265). The editors of the first monograph on the subject published at the end of last year speak of a „bad memory” – which is not only a form of oblivion, but also a term suggesting a dysfunction and deformation of memories. Researchers describing the trend point out in theatre plays and on theatre stages everything that had been „deliberately, consciously and mischievously distorted and masked” (Kwaśniewska, Niziołek 10), following Michel Foucault, apply the term anti-history.

¹ This was the opinion about *Transfer!* of R. Węgrzyniak (Węgrzyniak) and J. Golińska (Golińska), whereas A. Kyzioł observed that the play was „an overwhelming testimony of the time in which history went mad” (Kyzioł). At the same time, the vocabulary of right-wing publicist describing the Television Scena Faktu started to include the concept of „debunking history”. The use of this phrase also defines the assumptions of the then-current management of the TV Theatre: „When Wanda Zwinogrodzka became the artistic director of the Television Theatre in 2006, creating the Fact Stage, the priority was to debunk history” (Krasnodębska 9).

Following the gambit made in the first decade of the 21st century, Polish drama and theatre abound in examples of various examples of thematising and polemical use of historical discourse. Directors and authors combine in their artistic statements the problems of power, subordination and politics, undermining the authority of their established narratives. More and more often, there are also texts and performances that „allow the victims excluded from the history written by the winners to have their say” (Kwaśniewska, Niziołek 10), approaching the postcolonial practice of giving voice to the subordinated. The impermanence of authority and the observation of the borders moving through the changing fronts of war, of the decisions made at the top and of the alliances of those in power offer a glimpse into the grand history from the local perspective of the marginalized individuals and social groups. Shifts in such dependencies were described by Tadeusz Słobodzianek, who used the example of the relations between Poles, Russians, Jews, and Germans during the Nazi occupation in the widely discussed text *Our class. The subtitle: History in XIV lessons* stresses the didactic bend of the author, yet the diversity of the perspectives presented, without indicating the dominant view, limits the danger of intrusive didacticism, offering the only „just right” version of history.

The moving front and the introduction of new authority are also portrayed – this time from the perspective of soldiers on the move – in the play by Paweł Demirski titled *Long live the war!* Its heroes are wandering westwards with the units of the First Polish Army. By introducing the communist authority in the newly acquired territories, they realize the postulates similar to those proclaimed by the Polish Maritime and Colonial League, created in 1930:

I demand that the Polish army
move westward
and reach Berlin
and that nothing change (Demirski 345).

The author patterned himself in his text on the characters known from the Polish well-known TV series *Four Tankers and a Dog* (1966–1970), portrayed as oppressed individuals favouring the dominant political, ideological and military option. Each and every one of their movements is watched by the dog Szarik, here cast as a Russian agent, who every now and then reminds everyone of the warning and order of Red Army commanders: „No step back!” (Demirski 389–390).

Both of these plays remind us of the many hushed-down truths that we can come across in all the stories that reject a diversity of viewpoints. Paweł Demirski exposes them by presenting one of the tankers as a black person and another as a Jew. Stereotypes in the perception of ethnic groups are strongly emphasized in Olgierd's statements:

hey, you, funny Silesian blacksmith, come here for a while [...]
 did I say a stupid Georgian with a venereal disease? [...]
 and did I say: „You, black”?
 in an imitation-leather tracksuit jacket, you salesman
 of illegal cigarettes (Demirski 355–356)

The tank Rudy 102's first commanding officer, dying in the seventh episode of the series, gives Demirski an opportunity to highlight class differences, unresolved by the years of war, occupation, exile, and only apparent „brotherhood in arms”:

OLGIERD

what a scandal
 I'm rubbing shoulders with these farm-hands
 but I think that I need not explain
 who I am in this whole thing
 I really do not [...]
 just as I do not have to explain that
 my grandfather in the January Uprising

CZEREŚNIAK

my grandfather gave you a thrashing with hoes
 bleeding, you were escaping on ice (Demirski 362)

The repression of certain areas of historical memory is inextricably linked to the repression of certain classes and groups – religious, national and racial – whose status, or even generally understood identity, depends on their presence in the testimonies of the past and in memories. Theatre aiming at opening up historical discourse may contribute to the extraction of what has been hidden for years, to the resonation of what is programmatically silenced, to the utterance of what is hushed down. The postcolonial context, exposed by some theatre authors, may provoke attempts to more comprehensively describe the situation of marginalized groups and individuals. Especially interesting in the Polish perspective of these phenomena is the fate

of individuals directly affected by the shifting frontlines, changes of the authorities in power and of the borders during World War II and soon afterwards. This subject, though irregularly and infrequently, began to appear in Polish literature and film, as well as in drama and theatre. I will focus on two examples of polemical theatre practice; both break the dominant narrative of the „language of the victims” in Polish culture after 1989 about the topic of an „innocent and severely experienced community” (Kwaśniewska, Niziołek 10).

The aforementioned *Transfer!*, directed by Jan Klata in Wrocław, followed the “theatre experts formula”, used by the German Rimini Protokoll Theatre (Dreyse, Malzacher). It consists in the involvement of individuals, such as participants of events, who personally, in front of the audience, talk about themselves, their own experiences and the history they remember. *Transfer!* was a kind of verbal narrative about the war and post-war experiences of Polish repatriates from the territories of present-day Ukraine and representatives of other nationalities affected by Operation Vistula as well as Germans from Lower Silesia and East Prussia. Their multi-voiced memories informed the audience about the relations between representatives of various nations, which changed depending on the political circumstances. The characters appearing in the play often involve Jews, who in the stage presentation remain absent victims of history, devoid of their own voice. Among the memories of events and circumstances recalled, it was precisely their absence that triggered the strongest emotions, in both the audiences and in the participants of the play themselves.

A dramatic element combining all the threads appearing in *Transfer!* was a demographic change in Lower Silesia after World War II. Treated on an equal footing were the memories of people resettled from the East and reminiscences of the deportation of Germans from Wrocław and Lower Silesia. The characters who appear on the stage speak in their own name. In the eyes of the spectators they gain the authenticity which is impossible to obtain in the traditional theatre. As credible witnesses, they are also convincing as authors of the play, although its script, despite being based on their memories, was written by a team of dramaturges. The political volatility, highlighted by changes in the way children and young people learn, is best seen by one of the men in one of the initial scenes of the show:

I have six different school transcripts
in different languages

I completed three classes of grammar school before the war
 a transcript in Polish / one
 Russians enter
 certificate in Ukrainian and Polish / two
 Germans come
 transcript in German and Russian / three
 after the sixth grade, I enrolled in a clandestine high school
 certificate from an underground school / four
 Russians enter
 transcript in Ukrainian and Polish / five
 I do not go to eighth grade
 In 1946, I leave and settle in Kluczbork
 final school transcript / six (Funke, Klata, Majewski 21)

However, the stage stories are fast becoming marked by the tragedy of war and the desire to change the national relations in the territory of Ukraine. As put by another of the protagonists of *Transfer!*, in September 1939 „everything was over: plans, dreams, good neighbourly relations, and my childhood” (Funke, Klata, Majewski 22). The old woman recalls her own memories:

when the Germans came
 the Ukrainians began to murder
 I do not know why
 in a cruel way
 it was quiet during the day
 but at night
 they burned down everything
 whole villages
 only the glow was visible
 yet before the war the relations were good
 something happened to politics I guess [...]
 Ukrainians killed a priest
 they came in the night
 they massacred him
 cut off the ears, nose
 they wrote on the church wall
 in blood: marching west
 we started to fear (Funke, Klata, Majewski 27)

The established pattern of perceiving historical events is dominant. And even though the Ukrainians seem to be portrayed as unambiguously negative and – in the narratives of other nations – deprived of their voice, there is also evidence of Poles’ participation in

the plundering of Jewish property in the east. At the same time, however, the leading role of German soldiers is indicated; they carry out executions of civilians of different nationalities. The play gives their children the chance to speak; they would not see their parents as executioners, but rather as victims of the system. A woman who mentions that she could not stand the voice of Goebbels during radio broadcasts of his propaganda speeches, defends her mother and father, once dedicated to the national-socialist cause:

Blame or no-blame. Neither my father nor my mother are guilty. They are not guilty and I will not say this tonight. They lived in this system and could not do anything about it. I do not want to hear that my parents were Nazis (Funke, Klata, Majewski 30).

Theatre literature gives the impression of an unmediated citation of the characters' words, and the open performativity of the text allows actors to show their actions. Citing words and imagining the lifestyle and behaviour of real characters is a special case of stage acts. Directly quoting on the stage the participants of past events, their witnesses and victims, i.e. all those whose voice is not always heard outside the established historical narrative, is an endeavour to give them the right to speak in their own name. The words used are a testimony of the past, regardless of the pronunciation and the degree of illusiveness of stage acts. A special case in which theatre begins to function as a tool of historical discourse occurs when the protagonists provide personal narratives about their own experiences – depicting their private, biased view of universal history. Their personal impressions, preconceptions and the consciousness of the past in their memory become a full-fledged document of the past. This is the case of *Transfer!*, a play with a tremendous impact, despite the absence of stage experience of most of the actors appearing in it.

The second example of a play I would like to recall in the context of border shifts and resettlements is *Trash Story*, based on a text by Magda Fertacz (Fertacz), presented in June last year at the Lubuski Teatr Dramatyczny. Its director, Marcin Liber, goes back to the history of Zielona Góra – the city of his birth – more precisely to the fate of the Germans from the mid-1940s; he manages to find in it a universal tragic potential. The action takes place today, in the „regained territories”, in a house inhabited by the daughter of a post-war settler and her family. The stage, apart from the characters living today: Mother,

Small One or Widow, is peopled by ghosts. There is the spirit of Alexander, who drowned a few years before in the river behind the house, when he visited his home during a break in his military service in a war-torn country in the East (Iraq or Afghanistan, symbolizing unfulfilled Polish colonial ambitions). There are also ghosts of the Germans – of women who lived in the area and committed suicide in the face of the advances of the Red Army. In the original text, only one character originated in the netherworld – Ursulka, hanged by her own mother in the mid-1940s.

In Liber's staging of *Trash Story*, spiritual beings continue their existence in the place where they previously lived and died; they are among the living, in the spaces in which the people they used to be experienced moments of both utmost happiness and greatest tragedy. Now they are participating in a show that combines levels of existence: talking with the living in their dream visions, accompanying German tourists, and when the light goes out, they help the house occupants with cigarette lighters. A chorus of nine spirits tells the story of Ursula. The women who provide her text, acting out identical emotions as a group, remain individual, separate stage entities. Breaking the girl's character into ten voices, with a separate, tragic story behind each one, is a great complement to the dramatic effect Fertacz introduces. This is in particular true in the epilogue, when Ursulka's soothed souls appear on stage in the historical costumes of Bamber women, wearing beautiful garlands of colourful flowers on their heads.

However, the beginning is dark and disturbing. When the audience enters the theatre room, projected on the screen behind which the stage is located are scenes of SA divisions marching before Adolf Hitler. The vision of joy and pride of the cheering crowds does not screen the spectre of the upcoming war from present-day spectators. When the pause freezes the *image of the Führer, his hand raised in the Roman greeting gesture*, ten women talk about their personal and professional successes. *Each of them adds the name Ursulka front of their proper name – Klarin, Anne, Marthe, and Truda. Their stories tie into the local history from Lubuskie region, enriching dramaturgically the text of Trash Story.* They do not destroy the coherence of the drama or limit its target audience. This shows the individual dimensions of the grand history. An apothecary, painter, architect, pharmacist, and educator mark the contrast between their pre-war happiness and subse-

quent tragedy. Men in brown shirts were instrumental for the disappearance of colours from the streets of Grünberg. Their demands questioned the sense of educational, artistic and educational work and brought disaster to the city:

My Grünberg was beautiful, I saw colours everywhere. [...] I do not understand why people were suddenly disinterested in paper and watercolours and all were forced to buy portraits of soldiers against the backdrop of dark, sombre and monumental office buildings. [...] Everything was the same, uniform and dirty. [...]

Ah, once I was happy, I had a loving husband and a wonderful daughter. In Grünberg we organized the Grünfest every year – a holiday of vegetables, fruits and harvest. [...]

My world is falling apart when clashed with the pride, brutality and aggression of fascist militants. [...]

After many years of working with classical music, I could not come to terms with soldier chants. [...]

They wanted me to become a city educator in charge of the fascist approach to science!².

All stories end up with a dramatic leitmotif: „There was a big barn. I said goodbye and went”. They refer to the events of the early 1945, when the crossing of the former German border by the Red Army was accompanied by a wave of mass suicides of the local population, primarily women and children.

Having finished their stories, Ursulka stand up and, their arms straightened in the fascist greeting, sing a march popular in the Third Reich: *Am Adolf Hitler Platz* (this was the name of the former Kolejarza Square in Zielona Góra). When they depart, the canvas of the screen rises and the audience moves to the stage to sit on the chairs prepared for them. The main part of the show begins; the protagonist is a place saturated with a tragic history rather than any of the characters of the play. There is a white house with a red tile roof in this place; before the war Ursulka spent here her happy childhood. The daughter of the Poles who settled here after the war recalls it totally differently. She was afraid of the house. She remembers the „sticky walls” in which „something was constantly squeaking”. The house near the river, the yard and the vegetable garden store memories. The earth is soaked

² The quotations of the added excerpts of the text come from the typewritten script of the Lubuski Theatre.

with the tragic experiences of its inhabitants. As long as Ursulka's story is not heard out, her spirit will not find peace and solace.

One of the most significant and multifaceted discussions on history, both at the national and local levels, has been taking place for several years on the stages of Polish theatres, to a greater extent than in other fields of art. Its significance lies in the observation that the aim is not merely to change the content of existing historical paradigms or to abolish existing versions of past events in favour of their alternative variants, but rather to change the general perception of the phenomenon of history, which until now – as a narrative emerging in line with the narrative conventions of fine literature (White) has also affected individual memory. In theatre, thanks to the individualization of viewpoints, the notion of collective cultural memory, derived from the work of Maurice Halbwachs (Hassman), allowing Jan Assman to lift the opposition between memory and history (Borowski 65–74), shifts to the memory of private experience. Breaking up narratives into many speaking subjects, even if each of them is dominated by the current version of history, helps preserve the specific features that distinguish and individualize the story told.

Typical forms of narration contribute to the elimination of polyphonies. In dramatic genres, however, it is an inescapable element: a precondition leading to the creation of a dramatic knot and a means of creating conflict – the driving force of narrative variability. Polyphony, dispersal and the assumed contradictory points of view affect the blur of a homogeneous perception of history, dominated by established symbolic representation. In this way, sensitive to the voice of the Other, dramas introduce a polemic element into the existing authoritarian image of the past. The exposure and visibility of the silent perspective influences the perception of the theatre spectator, laying bare previously unknown, silent or displaced dimensions of reality. Dramas of this type – discovering the hidden – shape an awareness of the present time by creating a discourse on the legacy of the past.

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THREE WAVES OF HOMOSEXUAL EMANCIPATION IN POLAND

LGBT emancipatory discourses have today become one of the most important socio-political symptoms on the global map of dependencies, including postcolonial and neocolonial (Puar 2007). They can be presented as a mark of modernity or of the backwardness of a particular society. They can be “another” national discourse, even as an object of hate, or they can sometimes be an instrumentally used element of national discourse, whose real aim is to oppress some other minority, as indicated by Judith Butler in her book, *Frames of War*. Lately, these discourses have become the building blocks in the construction of the West-East divide. Perhaps we find ourselves in a critical moment of this process. The European Union supports the legalization of same-sex marriages, whereas the Eurasian Union, the brainchild of Vladimir Putin, is in favor of restrictions on what they call homosexual propaganda.

We should certainly not essentialize the relation of various societies to the gay-lesbian issue, which is why I would like to approach emancipation in Poland within a historical context and outline at least three decades worth of homosexual/gay activism. A counterpoint to this conceptualization will be the idea presented in *De-centering Western Sexualities. Central and Eastern European Perspectives* edited by Joanna Mizielińska and Ropert Kulpa, especially in their article: “Contemporary Peripheries: Queer Studies, Circulation of Knowledge and

East/West Divide". According to them, the "geo-temporal modalities" of the West and East differ in that the West is a "time of sequence" and the East a "time of coincidence", where every state of emancipation appears simultaneously. I would like to fracture this essentialized image and historicize the emancipatory discourse. This is not to provide a description of "lag" in relation to the West, but more about grasping the specificity of the local emancipatory dynamics.

Its reconstruction is not the easiest of tasks, because Polish institutionalized historiography almost completely ignores the homosexual context of history. This is certainly a blank spot, even though Poland is an exceptionally fruitful subject for such an inquiry. Poland has a very liberal penal code (from 1932), which decriminalized same-sex intercourse between adults. However, according to Monika Płatek, a criminal lawyer, despite such liberal laws (compared to other European countries), a certain kind of penalization still exists in the guise of punishments for homosexual prostitution, a crime for which one could have been easily prosecuted, considering that it was possible to construe accepting an invitation to a café or to the theatre as profit, thus indicating prostitution. However, this law was removed from the penal code in 1969, which entered into force in 1970. Therefore, at least in theory, the Polish People's Republic brought about the complete depenalization of sexual relations among people of the same sex (Płatek 2009). In the context of European and American law, Polish law appeared very progressive, though it should be emphasized that the lives of nonheterosexual people were anything but colorful, because homosexuality in everyday life was still considered pathological and taboo. And this state of affairs was an issue that doubtlessly connected the government of the People's Republic of Poland with the discourse of the Polish Catholic church. Emancipatory activities, therefore, did not center around the issues connected with sex (as this was legal in Poland) but on a whole array of issues which could be called, in the Hegelian tradition, "recognition" (*Anerkennung*) of a different, but decent life (Fraser, Honneth: 2005).

The emancipation waves¹ meshed with the next decades. This periodization could be summarily presented in the following way:

¹ I originally introduced the concept of "emancipation waves" in a German magazine, *Polen unter dem Regenbogen. Die drei Emanzipationswellen der Schwulen in Polen*. "Jahrbuch Polen" 2014. The outline of this concept appeared in my book (Warkocki 2013).

1. 1981 – 1989 – earlier stage of emancipation “different”
2. 1990 – 2003 – gay and lesbian emancipation
3. 2003 – till today – visibility in public discourse, the politicization of homophobia, homosexuals as objects of contempt in the nationalist discourse

The 1980s saw a kind of social liberalization in the People’s Republic of Poland, as topics which had been ignored earlier (among these, for example, was the issue of Polish-Jewish relations). It is, therefore, worth noticing that the beginning of the 1980s inaugurated two works which overtly thematize distinct (though similar) versions of masculine homosexual identity. On the one hand, we have Julian Strykowski’s long novel, *Tommaso del Cavaliere* (1981), and a short story, *Rudolf* (1980), by Marian Pankowski, who at the time was an emigrant residing in Brussels. The first story is about a brilliant artist, Michael Angelo, seen from the perspective of his overlooked student; the second is about the meeting of an exemplary professor with a German homosexual (in Polish literature, homosexuals were often depicted as foreigners), who took great pleasure in remaining on the margins of society (which of course shocked the professor).

Both of these works could be construed as existential propositions for homosexual men; in fact, these were the only valid possibilities, given the very meager palate of available roles. In short then: Artist or Pervert, compensation through art or hypocritically remaining at the margins of society. *Tertium not datur*. The literature from the turn of the 80s and 90s (such as Grzegorz Musiał’s *W ptaszarni* (*In the Aviary*), Marcin Krzeszowiec’s *Ból istnienia* (*The Pain of Existence*) and Marek Nowakowski’s *Grecki bożek* (*The Greek Divinity*)) illustrated just how inadequate this palette of possibilities is. Especially significant here is Krzeszowiec’s novel. His protagonist is neither an Artist nor a Pervert. Krzeszowiec presents a painfully emerging proposition for a new form of existence and identity: gay. Thus, a new decade was inaugurated (this novel was written at the end of the 80s and was published in 1992).

This is how the issue of identity appears from the point of view of literature. However, it should be remembered that the eighties are

This periodization in the context of other propositions has been analyzed by Łukasz Szulc. *Transnational Homosexuals in Communist Poland. Cross-border Flows in Gay and Lesbian Magazines*. London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2017.

replete with many traces of increased interest in this topic. The historical perspective of this topic was analyzed by Agata Fiedotow in her article "Początki ruchu gejowskiego w Polsce (1981–1990)" ("The Beginnings of the Gay Movement in Poland (1981–1990)"). Most importantly, something had changed in the political discourse. According to Fiedotow, the topic of homosexuality appeared during the period 1981–1989 about one hundred times; this is insignificant compared to what appeared in 1990, but very significant compared to what appeared before the 1980s. It was during this time that Barbara Pietkiewicz feature story, "Gorzki fiolet" ("Bitter violet"), was published in *Polityka* in 1981, i.e. in a mainstream, widely read weekly.

I would also like to mention Krzysztof Darski's (pen name Dariusz Prorok) article, fittingly titled "We're different", which also appeared in *Polityka* (1985), and is considered to be the first Polish gay emancipation manifesto. The following is a fragment from this article:

Ridiculed and pushed off to the margins of society, discriminated against by every (without exception) institution and social organization, persecuted by homophobes, assaulted physically and verbally by brute morons with the tacit approval of the authorities of this world, isolated and abandoned by their country, church and science [...]. Do homosexuals have any rights in our country? Is there anyone interested in helping them in their obvious personal troubles? Is anyone concerned about maintaining the stability of a relationship between two men? (Darski 8)

One of the most mysterious issues concerning homosexual men in the People's Republic of Poland was a nationwide operation code-named "Hyacinth". It targeted this community and took place near the end of 1985 (and was repeated a few times), carried out by the Citizen's Militia and (most likely) by the Security Service. Not much is still known about this operation. Though the Communist era of the People's Republic of Poland has become a subject of intensive research in Poland (even the "Syrenka" automobile has its own monograph), the persecution of homosexuals has not yet received competent historical attention, though it is known that during the whole communist period the Intelligence Service invigilated homosexual men (for example, Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz, Jerzy Andrzejewski and Michel Foucault) and a list of homosexuals was also compiled. Operation Hyacinth could have merely been a result of the intensification of these activities; its aim could have been connected to their peculiarly

understood notion of HIV/AIDS prevention, or it could have been an attempt to quell the first homosexual initiatives.

Who were these sexual queers of the 1980s? How did they see themselves, how did they define themselves? Agata Fiedotow's work provides us with interesting insights. It turns out that activists affiliated with the International Gay Association (IGA)² created a special cell which maintained lines of communication with the countries of the Communist Bloc – East Europe Information Pool (EEIP), whose task was to gather information about the legal and social situation of homosexual people and to establish contact with them. EEIP was created alongside the Austrian organization Homosexuelle Initiative Wien (HOSI) associated with IGA, and the coordinator was a Pole living in Vienna, Andrzej Selerowicz, which perhaps explains why contact with Poland were the most intense.

Fiedotow analyzed around 280 letters written during the 1980s to the representatives of EEIP and letters written to teen magazines *Razem* and *Na przelaj*. These sources provide an insight into the sad autobiography of homosexuals. Fiedotow points to the characteristic topoi: hostility and intolerance of the surroundings (but also poor living conditions – in complaints sent to Western organizations), constant fear and anxiety (the recurrent *topos* of paranoia), feelings of isolation, mental breakdown (alcoholism, depression, suicide), though sometimes – far more seldom – acceptance of one's sexuality ("I'm ok with this"). She also describes the various strategies of concealment, ranging from double lives in heterosexual marriages (Darski claims that most homosexuals in Poland were married) to solitude by choice.

The most interesting project on the part of EEIP was that of social demarginalization – an attempt to apply gay identity and the concomitant movement to the social situation during the last years of the Communist era. However, this attempt resulted in an absolute fiasco, because it was at odds with the reality of life in Poland. The Western activists were surprised by the resistance towards grassroots social initiatives not only from the government but also from the activists themselves, who were hesitant to formalize their activity (which would, of course, entail having to go public). For a long time, homosexual groups retained a predominantly social function, where "our

² From 1986 this organization goes by the name of ILGA – International Lesbian and Gay Association.

issues" could be discussed. Collecting contact information raised suspicions. The editor of the EEIP bulletin became for his readers a kind of friend and advisor rather than a potential leader of a gay movement. Building gay identity (openness, pride, relationships) and raising public awareness, in contrast to the image of "homosexual cruising" based on casual sex, ended in failure.

What was not successful by the end of the 1980s was gradually coming to fruition in the following decade. The 1990s saw the advancement of the gay rights movement and the stabilization of gay identity.

Let us start from the beginning. Firstly, freedom of association rights were changed, giving the regional courts, and not, as had been the case thus far, the administrative government the right to legalize associations. This gave way to the formation of Lambda in 1990. In some larger cities there appeared a semi-open infrastructure of social life. And what was certainly the most influential in its effects was the appearance of magazines geared towards homosexuals. Some were very ephemeral, others lasted for a long time, like the magazine *Inaczej* published in Poznań (twelve years). One cannot overestimate their significance. These were not pornographic magazines; they were distributed by "Ruch", making them available all over Poland. Though these magazines were not sold in villages and small towns, their availability was nonetheless quite good, which is why they were able to play the role of a course book for gay identity.

It is worth considering the words that homosexuals used to identify one another, to describe their own identity. During the 1980s the words "different" was frequently used. In some letters to the representatives of EEIP the words "homosexual" did not appear at all; instead, "different" was used as a positive euphemistic self-description ("I'm different"). Prorok's manifesto mentioned above was titled "We are different". And the Poznań-based magazine, established in 1990, was called "*Inaczej*" ("*Differently*"). Difference and otherness appear, therefore, to be a key to the identity of that time, and, at the same time, suggest a positive auto-definition in the absence of other non-derogatory terms. At the end of the 1980s the word "gay" appeared in Poland. First editions of magazines presented the literal assimilation of this word. They used the adjective "gayowski", which with time changed to "gejowski". This, however, was not just a word but also a whole identity project, which was concealed behind this term and

developed during the whole period of the 1990s and in the following decade.

This project never became the subject of a historical-sociological description and analysis, despite the abundance of necessary source material: magazine editions, the discussions that were found there, as well as numerous letters to the editor. This would have certainly been an interesting contribution to a study of Poland during the transformation period. Some things should be pointed out. First, the American emancipation tradition proved important, especially the "Stonewall myth", that is, an event that was meant to be a turning point. These events were often evoked with the expectation that in Poland something similar could (alternatively: could not) happen. The second issue concerns a kind of separatism between gays and lesbians, who constituted somewhat separate social groups with different social agendas. An expression of this separatism was to be found in *Inaczej* magazine, which had a predominantly gay focus with only a few pages devoted to lesbians. It should be added that the 1990s was a decade when lesbian identity in Poland clearly stabilized. This crystallization of the still pre-political lesbian identity was addressed during the 1990s by Joanna Mizielińska (Mizielińska 1999).

And the most important matter, i.e. "the homosexual question" during the nineties, did not resonate as an important social concern in public discourse. Journalists did not even consider asking politicians about their attitude to the legalization of same-sex partnerships or marriage. This concern was regarded as socially marginal and apolitical, something which was to radically change after 2003.

Let us refer once again to the literature of the last decade of the twentieth century. At the beginning of this decade, a quasi-emancipatory prose came into being, which went completely unnoticed by the critics. We can list Marcin Krzeszowiec's lengthy *Ból istnienia* (1992), Antoni Romanowicz's *Nie znany świat* (1992), Tadeusz Gorgol's *Zakazana miłość* (1990), Witold Jabłoński's *Gorące uczynki* (1989). These books tend to be depressing, because they illustrate the difficult state of homosexuality during the Communist era (it is then that they were written, though it was Third Polish Republic that allowed them to come into existence materially, though they remained unnoticed). Their characters say: yes, we're homosexual. Look how bad we have it (because indeed they did), understand us (this however never hap-

pened). It should be reiterated here that a new identity crystalized – gay (not the modernist homosexual).

Polish lesbian literature from the 1990s did not have a similar point of origin. The most substantial author was (and still is) Ewa Schillig, who in 1998 published *Lustro* (Mirror). This was the first Polish collection of short stories, in which the protagonist was always a lesbian (though it is not initially known which one, which contributes to the suspense). With time, the lesbian subject acquired a more distinct cultural articulation and, what is interesting, this occurred especially in poetry, for example in Ewa Sonnenberg's *Planeta* (Planet) (1997), Inga Iwasiów's *Miłość* (Love) (2000) and Izabela Filipiak's *Madame Intuita* (2002).

If one were to look for a watershed date, it would be (though of course tentatively) 2003. It was then that posters of same-sex couples were hung in some Polish cities as part of the campaign "Niech nas zobaczą" ("Let them see us"). Unfortunately, it did take too long before they were torn down. Karolina Breguła's whole artistic project was on display in a few galleries in Poland. Fifteen male and fifteen female couples, usually young and from large cities, are photographed holding hands and looking at us. These portraits incited a heated discussion and provoked extraordinary controversy. They were a symptom of something new: the issue of homosexuality broke through to the public discourse and became political. With time it succumbed to commercialization.

During this period a new gay-lesbian organization appeared, Kampania Przeciw Homofobii (Campaign Against Homophobia). Its name indicates a certain change in emancipatory thinking. The problem ceased to be "the homosexual", whose normality had to be argued; in this new approach the problem was the prejudice towards nonheterosexual people, i.e. homophobia.

Homosexuality became one of the incendiary points of national identity. And from this perspective –national – homosexuals started to be perceived as "other" (no longer as "different" like from the 1980s). This became especially visible during the banned Equality Parades. Przemysław Czapliński writes about this: "In the collective narration the sexual queer was shifted from the position of "different" to the position of "other", for which the most explicit example was the conduct of the police on November 19, 2005 in Poznań.

The [Equality] March was stopped by a countermarch – their participants were hurling insults, yelling “Pedaly do gazu” (“Gas the gays”) and “Zrobimy z wami co Hitler z Żydami” (“We’ll do to you what Hitler did to the Jews”). The police did not take any action against the demonstrators yelling the anti-Semitic and homophobic insults, but instead arrested 64 participants of the Equality March. It could be said that those who were hurling insults were testing their right to define Others – they learned that this behavior is not only allowed by even legally protected (Czapliński 119).

Indeed, Equality Marches and Equality Parades – representing a kind of politics of visibility – turned out to be particularly important for the third wave of emancipation. It should be added that these parades did not immediately draw media attention. It was not until they were banned (first in Warsaw in 2004 by then-mayor Lech Kaczyński) that the gay and lesbian struggle for equality and recognition attracted media attention and became a politically divisive issue. At the same time, it was then that a homophobic narrative with the homosexual as “other” was generated. Its extreme versions are visible today. Sometimes it is possible to have the impression that the current type of homophobia residing in right-wing media has exceeded all limits of decency and has acquired the appearance of a pogrom narrative.

For gay identity, the new decade, especially after 2003, brought with it changes. First of all, the technological revolution was under way, offering new and effective tools in the struggle for emancipation. The Internet and its possibilities assumed the task of mediating this activism as well as of sustaining a new gay and lesbian identity. At the same time, however, it killed off the paper press along with the previous gay identity that developed around it from the 1990s (because there was also a generation change). Transgender activism, especially around the *Tras-fuzja* organization (Anna Grodzka was earlier its chairwoman), was slowly becoming more visible.

Gay and lesbian literature, which, unlike its predecessors from a decade ago, was noticed, read and analyzed, because the social context gave it a particular significance. Michał Witkowski’s *Lubiewo* (2004) garnered particular critical attention. This was a camp story about homosexuals longing for the Communist People’s Republic of Poland, who cannot and would not adjust to the new capitalist reality, because, as indicated by research, social-economical stratification intensified in Poland, increasingly destabilizing the liberal subject of

gay-lesbian politics. In other words, it was difficult to talk about a stable gay identity or an “image of a typical gay person”, when economic and class differences have such an influence on that identity. Political interests also have a differentiation effect.

This phenomenon is reflected by the literature of the third wave of emancipation. Michał Witkowski’s *Lubiewo*, published in the first half of the new century, referred to the end of the 80s and – what is less obvious though still clear – also to the 90s and dealt with a very important identity opposition: “gej vs ciota” (gay vs fag) that was constructed within the context of Polish transformation. It is not difficult to notice that the offensive word “ciota” (“fairy”, “fag”) in the Polish language – apart from connotations with male homosexuality – means “frajer” (“sucker”, “pushover”), that is, someone who is a failure. *Lubiewo* can be, therefore, read as a story about the winners and losers during the Polish transformation written in a language of quasi-identity of homosexuals. In this version, “gays” are those who were not successful, they are the potential beneficiaries of the political change. One can only regret that in sociological analyses this class void in relation to homosexual identity (forming in the context of increasing economical stratification) rarely became a subject of constructive reflection in Polish *queer studies*.

This situation is presented differently in Paweł Demirski’s *Tęczowa Trybuna 2012*, a parallel text written almost a decade later, which, as a kind of national drama, was brought to the stage by Monika Strzępka³. This is a story written from the margins of the national community, because undoubtedly only there can we find gay football fans demanding seats for the Euro 2012, which took place in Poland. Here, “gays” are represented as the losers of 1990s social modernization, who nonetheless constantly (yet without success) aspire to middle-class status. What is more, it turns out that in terms of the neoliberal and conservative hegemony, the interests of gay football fans and artist from the upper class are definitely different.

Tęczowa Trybuna 2012 is written with Paweł Demirski’s particular “superconscious” style, as if he had taken Masłowska’s cue, where

³ The preview showing took place on March 5, 2011 in the Polish Theater in Wrocław. Worth mentioning is that *Tęczowa Trybuna*, along with six other, classic Polish modern plays, was removed from the playbill in 2016 as part of the political “good change” and fight against degenerate art (Soszyński 2016).

“the ear decides the style”, and “poetry slips into discourse” (Wojciechowska 36). This is also definitely a political play. A group of football fans wants to find their own place, where they could be themselves and feel safe. They want a rainbow and free stadium. And the word “trybuna”⁴ sounds very symbolic here, making all these pursuits look like an allegory, an allegory of the pursuits of any emancipatory group in Poland. What are they doing? Well, they are living in a free and democratic Poland won through the great sacrifices of their fathers and mothers.

It quickly becomes clear that their struggle for freedom is not the next chapter of the story of the struggle for freedom against the evil communist regime. On the stage, a projector showing street riots that took place during the marches, also from the 1980s. What is more, the characters as part of their own activities become unwittingly entangled in the reconstruction of the riots from the 1980s, organized by one of the main antagonists, President Hania, on the occasion of the grand opening of an airport. The message of this fragment is clear: yesterday’s opponents are often today’s oppressors. This is why the scene where the gay demonstrations are being dispersed, where the actors are falling down in slow motion and retreating, looks like one huge romantic irony.

Tęczowa Trybuna (Rainbow Tribune) 2012 perfectly sums up emancipatory activities as well as reactions to them, especially in Ikona’s ambivalent monologue concluding the play, which was inspired by Roy Cohn’s famous monologue in Tony Kushner’s *Angels in America*. Cohn was a dark character, a homosexual occupying the highest seats in the government, displaying a conservative image and absolute hypocrisy – and at the same time the biggest active homophobe. Ikona is one of the boys from this group, who – to recontextualize Cohn’s whole monologue – sums up the activities of *Tęczowa Trybuna* and, at the same time, in a cynical and abbreviated manner, sums up the activities of all homosexual emancipatory groups which trusted the democratic rules of Poland. That is, formally, they were unable to achieve what is the litmus test of democracy in Poland. At the same time, there is a characteristic semantic shift in the text, which is played on in many fragments of the play. “Homosexual”, “fag” and

⁴ This is because in Polish the “trybuna” has two meanings: the English tribune with its political connotations and bleachers in a stadium.

other synonyms have different, context-dependent, meanings. The semantic ambiguity of this insulting word puts the existing categories under scrutiny and redirects us to other social distinctions. And this way, in Ikona's last paradoxical exclamation, he insults his own friends by calling them "fags", implying that they are not so much "homosexuals" as "losers". The consistent emancipatory struggle for recognition was pulled apart by economic mechanisms and the class structure. The Polish Cohn says this directly that in the face of democratic deficiencies and the economic stratification resulting from neoliberal economics the gay freedom of being oneself (just like everything else) has to be bought.

This play could, therefore, be read as a criticism of neoliberal discourse in Poland. Today, however, primary importance is definitely accorded to the nationalistic-catholic discourse. When we consider its main manifestations, such as burning Judyta Wójciak's work "Tęcza" during The Independence March 2013, or the well-organized ideological offensive called "battle with gender ideology" (which had a clearly homophobic subtext and agenda), the search for a "homosexual lobby" in the theater (or in the Catholic Church) or also the actions and statements made by the Polish nationalists, we will quickly notice that homosexuals are constructed as Others nationally and, at the same time, a politically useful object of hatred.

Thus, we have come from the invisible gays and lesbians to visibility; from the pre-political stage to the politicization of homosexuals and homophobia; from a liberal subject of emancipation to its criticism. One thing is certain: much is ahead of us.

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PART TWO

GEOPOETICS AND NOSTALGIA

RE-DISCOVERING THE SUDETENLAND IN CZECH LITERATURE AFTER 1989

The area under analysis, called in German *Sudetenland*, *Sudetengebiet*, and *Sudetenraum*, and in the Czech language *Sudety*, has no equivalent in Polish which would aptly reflect its unique history and culture. The term “Sudety” is strictly geographic. Semantically better, it seems (if only due to the different history of Poland and the territory of the present-day Czech Republic, with no clear connotations), is the Polish term “Kraj Sudecki”, which however should be seen as a larger region than the Czech-German and Czech-Austrian frontier. Its uniqueness originated already in the Middle Ages: since the first half of the 13th century¹ it has been inhabited, also on the Czech side of the border, in large measure by German nationals, who for centuries, up to the 20th century, upheld their language and traditions and resisted assimilation with the local Czech element. However, it was primarily the 20th century that was a time when the notions of “sudeckość” [literally: Sudetenlandness], “problem sudecki/kwestia sudecka” [Sudeten problem/issue] or “Niemcy sudeccy” [Germans of Sudetenland] acquired a new meaning.

Starting with the question of the Czech-German frontier, we must not lose sight of the fact that the entire territory of the present-day

¹ The colonisation of the frontier on the orders of King Wenceslas I of Bohemia (1230–1253) meant the settling of the territory by primarily German speakers.

Czech Republic, since at least the 10th c.² has been inhabited by Jews, partly cherishing their own traditions, partly – to a varying degree – assimilated with both the Czech and German nationals. In the wake of World War II, this area saw an extermination of the Jews and an eviction/displacement/expulsion³ of the Germans. The frontier regions lost most of their population, becoming at the same time an area of oblivion, punishment and anarchy; some villages vanished without a trace, others were forcefully settled with citizens whom the new regime found “uncomfortable”, still others were left to self-appointed councils of the locals. A lack of continuity of tradition, a lack of a natural social stratification and a deliberate lack of interest on the part of the authorities resulted in numerous acts of violence, injustice and gradual destruction. While the non-ethical conduct of the Germans was in the years 1948–1989 exploited by the propaganda of the communist regime⁴, similar behaviour on the part of the Czechs with respect to Jewish and primarily German compatriots was at that time cautiously hidden. It was only after 1989 that began – first in Czechoslovakia and then in the Czech Republic – the documentation and

2 First written records.

3 In Czech “vysídlení”/“odsun”/“vyhnání”; the choice of the term still triggers much debate, both among specialists (primarily historians as well as literary scholars and sociologists) and in the press. The topicality of the issue is confirmed e.g. by the activity of Antikomplex movement, offering a number of publications and educational projects for schools and the general public on the Sudetenland and on the German minority, e.g. *Zmizelé Sudety* (*Vanished Sudetenland*), *Tragická místa paměti* (*Tragic places of memory*), *Otevřená hranice – 10 let poté* (*Open border – 10 years after*) (more information: www.antikomplex.cz, access: 20. 02. 2015). The above debates, no doubt of great significance, resulted in the educational materials recommended for use by the Czech Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports on eviction/displacement/expulsion, providing ample evidence for the anarchy and violence of the process (<http://dum.rvp.cz/materialy/vyhnani-a-odsun-nemcu.html>, access: 20. 02. 2015).

4 E.g. V. Řezáč, *Nástup* (1951; in Polish *Powrót*, 1953), a novel made into a movie (*Nástup*, dir. Otakar Vávra, 1952); *Bitva* (1954; in Polish *Bitwa*, 1957), a novel made into a movie, too (*Kronika žhavého léta*, dir. Jiří Sequens, 1973).

We should add that there are also non-biased artistic images, e.g. the short story by J. Durych *Boží duha* (it is critical to see the disparity between the writing of the text and its publication; the author completed the text in 1955 and it was published in 1969), as well as the series *Synové a dcery Jakuba Skláře*, based on a script by J. Dietl in 1985 (forced displacement of all citizens of German nationality to Germany was presented as unjust in a touching scene of the protagonist’s family saying goodbye to the daughter/sister, accompanying her German husband, relocated to Germany pursuant to post-war decrees).

studying of the 20th-century history and multicultural traditions of frontier regions⁵, stripped of residents of both “inappropriate” nationalities a few decades before. This situation is aptly commented upon by the Polish historian Robert Trąba; in order to open up national memory to the memory of other nations and communities, he proposes the term “polyphony of memory” (quoted after: Rybicka 349n).

Reflection on the Czech polyphony of memory has been since the 1990s reflected in literature⁶. When analysing these texts, literary criticism asked postmodern identity questions. However, the spatial turn in contemporary humanities shifts the study focus to another issue⁷; each of the authors addressing the question tried to re-connect the frontier territories to the rest of the country through their texts, making use of the role of literature for the formation and design of geographical space, (re)constructing places and territories. Attempts at discovering this area of heterotopy demonstrate differences of opinion arising from the national factor⁸ and are also artistically divergent. I have selected three dissimilar approaches.

⁵ E.g. *Transfer/Vyhnání/Odsun v kontextu české literatury – Transfer Vertreibung Aussiedlung im kontext der tschechischen literatur*. Ed. G. Zand, J. Holý. Brno 2004; *Vysídlení Němců a proměny českého pohraničí 1945–1951 (volume I-VI)*. Ed. A. von Arburg, T. Staněk. Středokluky 2010; M. Peroutková, *Vyhnání – jeho odraz v české a německé literatuře a ve vzpomínkách*. Praha 2008 (in German 2006).

⁶ E.g. K. Tučková, *Vyhnání Gerty Schnirch*. Brno 2009, 2010; J. Katalpa (actu. T. Jandová), *Němci. Geografie ztráty*. Brno 2012; D. Jařab, *Za vodou* [from a trilogy of theatre plays *Dokud nás smrt ...*] (27. 03. 2014 – premiere).

A valuable approach to similar issues is offered in a book by the British author Simon Mawer *The Glass Room* (2009; in Czech *Skleněný pokoj*, 2009, 2012, 2013), nominated in 2009 to the prestigious literary award *The Man Booker Prize*, inspired by the plight of a Brno-based Jewish Tugendhat family and their famous modernist villa, designed by the world-famous German architect Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, since 2001 on the UNESCO world heritage list.

⁷ “Since culture is always conditioned and dependent on situations, space [...] will become one of its major features.” E. Rybicka, “Geopoetyka (o mieście, przestrzeni i miejscu we współczesnych teoriach i praktykach kulturowych)”, in: *Kulturowa teoria literatury. Główne pojęcia i problemy*. Ed. M. P. Markowski, R. Nycz. Kraków 2006, p. 477. “Space and place are not, then, seen by geopoetics as a subject or category of text composition, an element of representation. They are rather, I wish to stress that, a frame, tool and issue”. E. Rybicka, *Geopoetyka. Przestrzeń i miejsce we współczesnych teoriach i praktykach literackich*. Kraków 2014, p. 12.

⁸ See numerous books reliant on memory, especially by pre-war citizens of Czechoslovakia of German origin, e.g. E. Althammer-Švorčíková, *Češi jsou vlastně docela milí...*

In his novel *Grandhotel*⁹ (2006, in Polish 2011), **Jaroslav Rudiš** treats one of the major towns¹⁰ of Sudetenland, Liberec in north Bohemia, as an enclosed area, we may safely say a ghetto. It is this ghetto that the protagonist unsuccessfully tries to flee a number of times, until he finally realises that the only way out is the way up, through the clouds. The town limits, for reasons unclear to the reader¹¹, are an unapproachable mental barrier. However, being enclosed within this space, or rather being doomed to it, does not scare the protagonist. He gets to know his world not so much across – in terms of territory, but primarily in-depth, in terms of time. Repeatedly, with a nearly obsessive regularity, he enumerates all the historical names of individual places, in passing reminding the readers about the multicultural traditions of the area:¹²

This is where I live and work. In Grandhotel on the Ještěd mountain. The hill used to be called Jeschken. And before then Jeschkenberg. And before then Jeschenberge. And before then Jesstied. And before then Jesstiedr. Apparently the hill's name got to do with some hedgehog or some cave. (Rudiš 19)

Similar chains of historical toponymies attract attention, especially that they are mentioned by the protagonist who looks like an autistic outsider, recognised by all around him as a weirdo, interested solely in the observation and documentation of the weather, as if trying to escape the overwhelming world of everyday reality. We learn from the protagonist, commonly regarded as a bit slow, what should be obvious for everyone: “[...] our town is a Czech-German town. Or German-Czech. You can choose. But you cannot run away from it.” (Rudiš 73).

The author evokes the German minority, indispensable for this region also through the figure of a former resident of the city who regu-

Česko-německé vzpomínky. Praha 2004. On the German side there are also literary images of post-war traumas, e.g.: H. Kennel, *Bergesdorf*. Prag 2003 (in Czech 2011), the novel which sparked tempestuous debates on the Czech side of the border.

⁹ The novel was made into a movie *Grandhotel*, dir. D. Ondříček, 2006.

¹⁰ “The city seems at present a privileged area of studies on the relation between space and memory”. E. Rybicka, *Geopoetyka. Przestrzeń i miejsce we współczesnych teoriach i praktykach literackich*. Kraków 2014, p. 309.

¹¹ Only at the end of the novel does the reader realise that the reason the protagonist was enclosed in the “ghetto” of the city was the death of his parents in a car crash.

¹² All translations from Czech originals by author.

larly comes and asks the protagonist to accompany him on his sight-seeing tour of the city of his youth:

We took the tram with Franz. [...] from one end of the town to the other [...]. We did this often. Franz liked to enjoy the view. He was looking around the town, digging for memories, talking about [...] his life that was nearing its end [...]. And out of the blue it again seemed to me that Franz is not Franz, that he is one of those people who no longer exist. [...] "So what is our motto?" Franz asked. "You must end in the same place where you were born. (Rudiš 126n)

The last words seem to explain one of the seemingly obvious reasons for elderly Germans revisiting the areas where they spent the first years of their lives.

The author familiarises the reader of his novel with the space whose history/memory was forgotten for nearly half a century, via mythologizing one of its architectural symbols, an actual television aerial linked to a hotel, with a characteristic shape of a tapered pyramid:

I work in a hotel [...] above it infinity starts, in a hotel that sometimes for weeks [...] disappears in clouds [...]. Well, this is where I live and work. Lost at the most beautiful spot on earth, where land ends and sky begins. [...] the most beautiful places on earth have such a magical power of attraction. Like the Eiffel tower. (Rudiš 19n)

Importantly, one of the effects of recurrent mythologizing is the shift of the traditional focus of the Czech cultural world, the centuries-old and multicultural Prague, towards the younger and equally multicultural Liberec: "What I know is that in the centre of the solar system is the sun. [...] The centre of the storm is the cumulonimbus cloud. [...] What I know is that the centre of my universe is not only the weather but also our town." (Rudiš 84)

When the author shows the protagonist as lost, this may be justifiably interpreted as a metaphor of the plight of the citizens of the frontier territory:

I work in a hotel that does not have corners and yet you can still crack your head and lose your mind. In a hotel where everything is round and where you can lose your way just as easily as in a fog, in a large city or inside yourself and that is something that once in a while happens not only to me but to absolutely everyone and so one should be prepared for it. That is what my doctor says. (Rudiš 19)

One more metaphor can be found in the eponymous, symbolic Grandhotel. As there are no corners or reference points in the hotel,

the frontier territory lacks former fundamental elements of spatial and historical reference – houses, farms, churches, and monuments. There are people who are lost in space and a physician who tries to help domesticate and order this space¹³. This is the author's diagnosis of the present situation of Sudetenland: it is an area of people who cannot find their bearings and those who aim to restore major reference points.

Radka Denemarková in the novel *Peníze od Hitlera*¹⁴ (2006, in Polish *Pieniądze od Hitlera*, 2008, in English *Money from Hitler*, 2009) describes successive returns of a Jewish woman of German nationality with a Czechoslovak and then Czech citizenship to her family estate in the village of Puklice¹⁵ in the frontier territory. The first time she comes back to her native village in the summer of 1945, certain that she was coming back home, to the only place that survived the war, the time which wiped out her family. The next few times she comes back half a century later, in the summer of 2005, after her family was cleared of the accusation of collaboration with the Nazis and with the sole intention to commemorate this fact by a memorial. The novel, although it describes the time after what is traditionally perceived as Shoah, comes very close to the images of Shoah itself in its crushing and nearly naturalistic accounts of injustice and violence.

The book starts in a telling way, from the image of the land, by no coincidence red in colour, and the following situation:

Denis [a young child playing in a garden – L.N.V.] holds a green, pointy shovel in his hand and sticks it into softened reddish clay. [...] When he finishes, being out-of-breath, there is a strikingly long and narrow bowl lying in front of him, a bowl with strange stumps, crinkly cracks and holes. A white bowl. He lifts it and cleans it. He peels bits of dirt off. He rinses it with a child's watering can. [...]. Surprised, he looks into two empty holes. Eye sockets. It is a skull. A human skull. (Denemarková 11n)

As early as the prologue, from which the above excerpt is chosen, the reader can learn through synecdoche and symbolism the essence

¹³ The same author in the comic strips *Bílý potok* (in Polish: *Biały Potok*, 2003) and *Zlaté Hory* (in Polish: *Złote Góry*, 2005) shows fragments of the past of residents of frontier area mountains – Czechs, Germans and Poles – as nebulous visions of the protagonist, a mental ward patient.

¹⁴ Importantly, the novel's translation into German (*Ein herrlicher Flecken Erde*, 2009, transl. E. Profousová) received two awards in Germany.

¹⁵ Users of the Czech language associate the name of the village with the verb "puknout", i.e. burst and with the plural form of the noun "puknutí", or "rupture".

of the evolving plot: this land will be a place and home as well as the denial and death of the unwanted ones.

Land, space, is shown in the novel almost always with the attendant emotions: "I'm returning home." (Denemarková 19) "Nothing will be like before. I will never touch *their* skin. [...] Our farm remained. Walls behind which I will hide and gather strength [...]" (Denemarková 20).

The inevitable death moves from the area of Shoah proper to the place which used to be native ground:

It is a trap. Such a simple trick from Puklice. Just a trick. The language that I speak will decide my fate.¹⁶ The words that come out of me will result in me facing the wall or setting the conditions. Words mixed with my saliva will send me from the railway station ramp, from the massive empty platform either to the left to a gas chamber or to the right in the direction of hope of survival. (Denemarková 58)

A representative of the new, post-war local authority explains to the protagonist after her return that no one expected a return of concentration camp prisoners to their native village, since such a comeback was considered very unlikely; her family property (estate, household, locksmith's workshop, distillery, and starching studio) had been divided and could not be regained from its new owners. The reader is not shown what the village looks like; place descriptions are vague and fragmentary. They vanish in the text like the image of the protagonist's house was to vanish in her memory under the decisions of the local authorities.

When after the social rehabilitation of her parents in 2005 the protagonist returns to her village, she encounters a small store in her former family home and decides to enter it, first without disclosing her identity:

Actually I don't know what I want to buy. I notice the rotating stand with postcards and magazines. I select a rectangular postcard. A photo of Puklice. A rigid picture of a God forgotten village divided into a few segments. The shopkeeper does not want to give me the envelope although it is included in the price. (Denemarková 82)

Space was once again characterised via impression and feeling, this time a feeling of enmity towards Strangers, or *Others*, although the salesperson might only suspect the client's "status".

¹⁶ I.e. German or Czech language, before WWII co-existing in border regions. – L.N.V.

The resistance of Puklice, of “space”, and more precisely of the people laying claim to this space, to accept a different element which used to belong to it/them, will prove, despite the shocking experience from the preceding visit, much more powerful than the protagonist had expected. Her ample experience of being expelled from any space will gain one more form: the locals will assault her, e.g. using the following (pseudo)argument: “Is it not surprising that only you of the entire family have survived the concentration camp?”. Still, the protagonist’s need to perpetuate tradition and thus to save memory – her own, others and the collective memory of a given space – grows stronger: “Every post-war visit to Puklice sucks my strength away. I return, not learning the lesson, and I constantly try to relate everything to those lost moments. Instead of living in the current ones. In my thoughts I never left Puklice. Only the body wandered the world, my soul was stuck here.” (Denemarková 209).

There will be no happy ending, though. The author consistently creates a symbolic history of Czech Jews from Sudetenland:

I am approaching the bus stop from which I can leave my nest; [...] I don’t believe my own eyes. They are saying goodbye! After all, they think of me. I look at their strange message with fascination. As if in a trance, I look at the friendly greeting. My family’s tombstone. A farewell to Gita Lauschmann. A greeting from all the good neighbours. One freshly sprayed in a warm yellow colour. On a scratched metal board with the timetable. [...] A yellow star with the label JUDE.” (Denemarková 210n)

Since the protagonist has no home, she leaves the village, symbolically and literally, via another place. Although this time it is her own decision, this space is again linked with the articulation of hate and craving for exclusion. The locals’ approach will force the protagonist to take things to court. After her death, legal action is pressed by her granddaughter, no longer intent to restore memory to the place but determined to seek compensation for the wrongdoing suffered. She repeats as a justifying argument: “If you seek justice, you have to do it till the end”. The omniscient narrator curtly comments on the granddaughter’s conduct: “[They launch – L.N.V.] a war that will not bring benefits to either side” (Denemarková 235). The words can be seen as a warning or a verdict of the text’s author: the new generation does not refer to space via the emotions of ties with the home, but through the sense of being wronged, which justifies its alleged rectification by

hook or by crook. The author creates a loop for the description of space by repeating the store scene: „Bára will cross the village green, she buys a postcard in the local shop. A photograph with the church’s erect finger, red roofs tightly huddled together and the spaghetti-like oblong palace with farm buildings.” (Denemarková 235). This time, however, the image of space, the place to which Shoah was transferred, provokes compassion rather than fear in the reader.

Josef Urban in his novel *Habermannův mlýn* (2001)¹⁷, based on true events, gives an account of the history of a German entrepreneur from the Czech-German frontier, who provided help to the Czechs, and yet was subject to anti-German hate after the war; the craving for taking over his property is an additional element.

A village in northern Moravia in the mountains Jeseníky on the Polish border, is shown as many other places – the eponymous mill, sawmill, woods, and village, a lot of detailed descriptions of interiors, pubs, nooks and corners, paths, and roads. A concrete image of space, despite the artistic author’s licence, looks very real or even verifiable, due to overt references to actual events from history. However, desolation is part of it, hidden by the author until the very last pages of the novel. Only in the postscript does the author show the current state:

I am standing in a meadow that hasn’t been mowed for a long time and I am looking around. At a short distance below there are derelict buildings. Both of us [with the father – L.N.V.] are looking in the same direction, observing the old peeling walls of a big building that looks abandoned. “What are these houses?” pointing my head in the direction of buildings covered in overgrown vegetation. [...] Father is thinking hard [...] suddenly he raps his forehead with his finger: “That is the mill where in forty-five they killed some Haberman.” [...] “And who killed him if he was not a fascist?” I ask forcefully and in all honesty I do not understand it. (Urban 184)

The superimposition of the images of space “then” and “now” shows the complete non-place. The absence of people and the houses they once lived in, the desolation and emptiness, as well as a lack of memory about the place and its inhabitants (like numerous other non-places of the post-war settling of scores with the Germans) are the suppressed and excluded part of the non-place described. As the author implies via the dramatic juxtaposition, it is high time to forget this non-place to restore its memory, if not life.

¹⁷ The novel was also the basis for the movie *Habermannův mlýn*, dir. J. Herz, 2010.

The novel, a fictionalised narrative merging the eyewitnesses' account gathered by the author, contains few features of artistic literature, however, as the other two, triggered vehement social debate on the eviction/displacement/expulsion of the Germans after World War II. The book's impact on the readers is directly due to its references to genuine events, places and people.

* * *

Sudetenland is addressed by all the three authors via the protagonists' autobiographical memory, thus tincturing the images of this area with a clearly emotional character, typical of individual memory ("Lost in the most beautiful place in the world, where the earth ends and heavens begin."). Building a narrative based on memory, writers re-merge three sections of time determined by our culture, whose coherence was disrupted in this territory – reflecting on memory is in this case the key task for the present and future ("She will start a War which will benefit no one."). The measures applied by the writers under discussion here can be linked to questions about identity. While they are indispensable in multicultural areas, after the displacement/eviction/expulsion they become (seemingly) unequivocal, nearly superfluous ("[...] our town is a Czech-German town. Or German-Czech. You can choose. But you cannot run away from it").¹⁸

The time perspective is significant. In the novels the main narrative follows the chronology of events, and at the same time it gets disrupted a few times through flashbacks and references to the future ("Surprised, he looks into two empty holes. Eye sockets. It is a skull. A human skull."). It is these glimmers, or recourses to the past and future, while they barely signal past or future tragedies, that highlight the dramatic nature of the narrative and are a kind of parallel of the memory of all of us, of collective memory. Through suppression (or deliberate omission and lies), executed by the state system after World War II, Czech collective memory today has only "glimmers" of the events which are an inglorious part of post-war history (while school education after 1989 has gradually been changed, the historical identity of older generations is still largely based on the knowledge they acquired at their school time).

¹⁸ P. Ricoeur indicates a close link between autobiographical memory and the attendant identity with narrativity. P. Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*. Chicago, 1994.

Reasons for the incompatibility of individual memory and collective memory are convincingly accounted for by Ricoeur in his *Memory, History, Forgetting*: "This tenacious adherence of the 'who' to the 'what' is what makes the transfer of memories from one consciousness to another so difficult" (Ricoeur 2006: 126). At the same time the author points to the moment of possible contact, and thus the coherence of both memory types: "In its declarative phase, memory enters into the region of language; memories spoken of, pronounced are already a kind of discourse that the subject engages in with herself" (Ricoeur 2006: 129). The entry of individual memory into the public sphere can be linked with the difficulties arising from the remembrance of the traumas suffered, observes the philosopher, and the above texts (irrespective of their place on the scale between the term "document" and "fiction") prove it perfectly well. As to the commonly accepted opposition of individual memory and collective memory, Ricoeur puts forth a hypothesis of its triple rather than binary attribution:

Does there not exist an intermediate level of reference between the poles of individual memory and collective memory, where concrete exchanges operate between the living memory of individual persons and the public memory of the communities to which we belong? This is the level of our close relations, to whom we have a right to attribute a memory of a distinct kind. The close relations, these people who count for us and for whom we count, are situated along a range of varying distances in the relations between self and others. (Ricoeur 2006: 131)

This triadic concept of memory seems the most appropriate for the above literary texts. The protagonists' individual memory is handed down to their close relations (level of plot), and thanks to the mimetic aspect of literature also to readers (reality level). In this way authors of novels, making use of the centuries-old role of literature, restore through plot (almost real) images of historical events to the collective memory, simulating the natural tripartite message of memory I-close ones-society. Engagement of the close ones is easy to find in the plot ("And who killed him if he was not a fascist? - I ask forcefully and in all honesty I do not understand it."), and the interest of the "close ones" from the reality outside of the book is proved by numerous debates on the works under analysis.¹⁹ The restoration of memory, con-

¹⁹ See e.g. bibliography at the website of the Institute of Czech Literature of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic: Rudiš:<http://isis.ucl.cas.cz/websearch?form=biblio&author=&action=Vyhledat&title=grandhotel&subject=&source=&from=&to=&genre=all>

tingent according to Ricoeur on the community of time and space – “The shared experience of the world rests upon a community of time as well as space” (Ricoeur 2006: 130) – becomes thus possible thanks to the simulated proximity of protagonist-reader, creating a community of time and space.

Sudetenland, after a forced period of being subject to oblivion, comes back. In Czech literature this area becomes a significant supplement to the famous and popular place of intersection of national and supranational discourses, i.e. Prague. Due to the restoration of memory, the introduction of the term “polyphony of memory”, it is worthwhile to ask a question about WHAT the current citizens of the Czech Republic decided to remember. Through e.g. mythologization, plot and narrative inspired by real events, contemporary Czech literature tries to reflect on the suppressed and hidden historical spaces. This area returns, perhaps not in mainstream literature, but is offered enough attention and reflection. After all, Rudiš is one of the most popular young authors and his *Grandhotel* one of the most popular recent books; the movie adaptation of the novel has been recognised, too. Denemarková is one of the most appreciated women writers and literary scholars, her book *Peníze od Hitlera* being awarded with the prestigious Czech literary award Magnesia Litera (2007). The novel *Habermannův mlýn*, like the movie based upon it, provoked a lot of social debate. The pulsation of present and past, evident in all the books dedicated to the space of Sudetenland, is crucial for the sake of the future.

When Paul Ricoeur in *Oneself as Another* described the importance of the present for a person’s understanding of him- or herself, he left out space as less useful during the determination of the meaning of human existence. He moreover observed: “Nothing is lost of what has been. Minimal meaning: nothing could make it that that being had not existed” (Ricoeur 2008: 47). The literature of Sudetenland joins one with the other, making up an indivisible whole. Persistence and memory, the temporal dimension, markedly shapes this space. Since Kenneth White defines geopoetics as a “study of intellectual and sensual relations between the human being and the Earth to develop

&b70=on&b8090=on&b97=on&log=*&output=short (access: 25.02.2015), Denemarková: www.slovníkceskeliteratury.cz/showContent.jsp?docId=1376&hl=denemarkov%C3%A1 (access: 25.02.2015), Urban: <http://isis.ucl.cas.cz/detail.jsp?rowID=30790&db=B97> (access: 25.02.2015).

a harmonious cultural space [...] in order to [...] place contact and relation and to express it: the question of expression (language) is fundamental [...]" (White 21), expressing this space via language in its fullest complexity is paramount for the human predicament.

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MEMORY AND OBLIVION VERSUS THE YUGOSLAVIAN HERITAGE. THE CASE OF SERBIAN AND CROATIAN EMIGRANT LITERATURE – A PRELIMINARY DIAGNOSIS

In the German-language autobiographical novel by Saša Stanišić, a writer of Serbo-Bosnian extraction, the narrator-protagonist, a teenage boy, leaves war-torn Bosnia and moves with his parents to Germany. When after the war he comes back as a student to his hometown Višegrad seeking a girlfriend he knew in his (lost) childhood, he visits his father's friend, a music teacher. For a short moment he remembers him and reminisces on the time from before the disintegration of Yugoslavia. After a few minutes he loses touch with the past and introducing himself, asks the young man: "Petar Popović, who do I have the pleasure?". When this sequence is repeated a number of times during the visit, the teacher's wife observes: "Perhaps this is all for the better ... This way one can hide from memory and prevent the dreadful present slap you in the face day by day" (Stanišić 2008: 294).

The above scene registers two divergent types of experience: that of a narrator who **left his homeland** during the war and comes back to it to **be reminded** of the recent pre-war and wartime Yugoslav past as well as that of a music teacher who **stayed** in his home country but who does not want to **return** to the past, or rather who **would not remember** it. In both cases **memory** and **forgetting** are differently

functionalised and valorised; one is the protagonists' antidote, while the other is their poison, and vice versa.

The divergent valorisations of the past (in this particular instance) heritage of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia are a consequence of the strategies of remembering and forgetting, which this heritage is subject to at present. The interplay of memory and forgetting (an issue introduced by Friedrich Nietzsche in *Untimely Meditations* [Banasiak 2008], later interpreted insightfully by Derrida in his famous reading of Plato's *Pharmakon*), sets in motion various, sometimes mutually exclusive values, which make the SFRY a sign of social security, political independence, opposition against nationalism and isolationism, or otherwise linked to totalitarianism, cult of the individual, dominance of one nation, *uravnilovka*, restraining civil liberties and repressions; in a word, with the *ancien régime*. The above divergent meanings are implied by the fact that, as the Serbian sociologist Todor Kuljić observes, each mode of remembering Titoism is dominated by a different component: cognitive, symbolic or ideological (Kuljić 226). It should be moreover borne in mind that the coming to the fore of these different meanings is closely linked with the presence of various discursive practices, which have been emerging to this day after the collapse of Yugoslavia.

The issues under scrutiny here are, naturally, present also in the social sphere of the other countries of the former Eastern Bloc; however, the experience of the last wars had an indelible impact on the uniqueness (intensity and progress) of the processes of "coming to terms" with the pre/communist past of the nations of the former SFRY. Therefore, when examining post-Yugoslav "émigré" literatures, it is necessary to contextualise the actions of its authors. The dramatic circumstances in which these authors were forced to flee their homelands prevent us from seeing their biographies and texts as being motivated or underpinned by the same reaction, which would allow for a shared description of their texts. As a result, the departure from the traditional approach to emigrant literature (Bolecki 1999: 249), motivated by the socio-economic transition taking place after 1989, for the sake of treating this literature as an "intertext" (*międzytekst*) registering a most profound existential experience (not only autobiographic) of leaving one's country of origin and participating in two cultures, as put forth by Mieczysław Dąbrowski, may seem insufficient in reference to post-Yugoslav cases (Dąbrowski 93-105).

This situation arises primarily from the fact that the Yugoslav authors still prior to 1989, or rather prior to 1991, i.e. before the outbreak of the fratricidal war, had been immersed in the multicultural; many intellectuals built their Yugoslav identity on this cultural rather than (only) political community. The outbreak of the war annihilated the space of this community and became a catalyst of the longing for it, known as Yugo-nostalgia, as well as the need of coming to terms with the time of Tito¹, including the revaluation of those aspects of the social, political and cultural life which were taboo in Yugoslavia. One of them was emigrant literature.²

The untenability of describing post-Yugoslav literatures via e/migration, the category proposed by Mieczysław Dąbrowski, stems moreover from the problematic existence and status of emigrant literature in Yugoslavia in the traditional (i.e. politically-motivated) meaning of the term from before 1989. This is due to the fact that the notion of emigrant literature, based on categories of repression and exclusion, is easier to build in reference to the ideological and political totalitarian order in its pure form (e.g. nazism, fascism, communism). For various reasons, Titoism evades such pigeonholing, although its methods of fighting political opponents were in essence no different than those used in other totalitarian systems.

Since the late 1940s, i.e. after the exclusion of Yugoslavia from the Comintern in 1948, the Yugoslav model was considered a “soft” version of socialism. Apparently, as many believe, this was borne out by the fact that Yugoslavia did not join any military alliance (which was used by Tito for self-promotion in his allegedly “autonomous” foreign policy), as well as the opening of the borders, which facilitated a more unencumbered flow of ideas and people (Marković 2007: 28 ff).

Economy-wise, the situation of Yugoslavia was also different from that of the other socialist state because of social (cooperative), rather

¹ Referring to the need of “coming to terms”, I mean the political and ideological (nationalist, leftist or liberal) preferences of the authors of those revisions. One of the manifestations of it is e.g. the u-nostalgia, or a carving for an Independent Croatian State. (Baković 315-323)

² The publications of texts by authors doomed to oblivion in the SFRY for political reasons were made in Serbia e.g. by Gojko Tešić; earlier, in 1988 their names were made public by Predrag Palavestra (1988). The biographies and a lexicographic presentation of the works by Croatian writers doomed to oblivion after WWII were presented by Vinko Grubišić (Grubišić 1990).

than state ownership of means of production and enterprises. Titoism was moreover unique due to the official non-existence of censorship. At the same time, freedom of expression, although enshrined in the successive constitutions, first of the NFRY (Narodna Federativna Republika Jugoslavija, National Federal Republic of Yugoslavia) and the SFRY, was nowhere to be found, as it was curbed by another constitutional provision, prohibiting the use of the freedom of speech, e.g. "in order to topple the democratic socialist order" – See a comprehensive article accounting for the practice of censorship in the SFRY in the Bosnian media (Defderdarević 1998).

The objectives and tasks of Yugoslav literatures after World War Two and the role of the writer were clearly and precisely defined in the party directives or resolutions adopted during party plenary conferences, congresses and meetings; these documents in fact mapped out the writers' stomping ground. The existence of a narrow margin of liberty was based, as is claimed by the philosopher Nenad Dimitrijević, on a "tacit agreement" concluded between the regime and the writers preventing the questioning of the appropriacy of the road taken by the authorities (Dimitrijević 137-159). Supposedly, such an agreement sanctioned the impossibility of being an intellectual apart from the system of state-controlled institutions³, which in the circumstances of Yugoslavia led to widespread self-censorship, the practice of *ketman* or, in very rare instances, to authors becoming dissidents.

As a consequence of the above stance of Yugoslav intellectuals until 1980 (not the only one, even if definitely the most common), there was no organised opposition with structures of the "underground" state, second circulation of books and the press and institutionalised active dissident émigré community. We can thus safely say that the Yugoslav model of socialism proved more fateful for the intellectual circles than in Poland, the Soviet Union or Czechoslovakia. The belief in the "softness" of the Yugoslav mode of socialism and "creative liberties" of Yugoslav artists as opposed to the situation of those in the other socialist states contributed to what in hindsight can be called a "stifling" of intellectuals' alertness.

Another aspect of the complex situation is the question of dissident activity (political and literary) in Yugoslavia. The unique posi-

³ Slavenka Drakulić calls the intellectuals embroiled in the system "state" or "party" intellectuals (Drakulić 73).

tion of the country after World War Two was accountable for the fact that it had fewer dissidents than the other countries of the Socialist Bloc. The category itself is a bit dubious. On the one hand, doubts arise from the imprecise term “dissident” and its use in a broad, dictionary meaning (inclusive of opposing views), which implies its application to both legal and illegal actions, the latter being born of an opposition to, or rebellion against, the system.

As a consequence of its broad understanding, the term is applied by Nebojša Popov in an article discussing the chronicle of the Serbian dissident movement, e.g. to members of the Praxis group, **legally** active during the time of Yugoslavia and to Dobrica Ćosić, who despite a departure from Tito’s line **was never persecuted by the regime**⁴. Moreover, Jelka Kljajić-Imsirović applies the term “dissident” to all cases resulting from the authorities’ terror (Kljajić-Imsirović 1998). On the other hand, another famous Serbian opposition member Mihajlo Mihajlov, narrowing down the use of the term to people whose views differed from those of the regime, were illegal and triggered the regime’s reprisals, observes that there were only two dissidents in Tito’s Yugoslavia: Milovan Đilas (Đilas, persecuted and repeatedly incarcerated by the time of Tito’s death in 1980, his texts coming out until the 1990s solely in the West) and himself (Radović, Đorđević 1998). A similar view is espoused by Todor Kuljić, an author of a study on Josip Broz Tito. Furthermore, statements by Mihajlov and Kuljić might point out that the term “dissident” may refer to people who played a special, historic role and contributed to the collapse of the system.

The other aspect of this unique phenomenon in Yugoslavia is linked with the fact of an inconsistent approach of the Yugoslav authorities to certain questions (like e.g. a tacit approval of the leftist critics of socialism, active in the Zagreb-based *Praxis* magazine and in the Korčula School with a simultaneous harsh treatment by the communists of the black wave in the cinema (the way the regime crushed the “black wave” in the cinema is accounted for by Arsić-Ivkov 2002), a manifestation of selective terror used by the regime in Yugoslavia; in the other socialist states terror was widespread).

⁴ See a series of editorials by Mirko Kovač dedicated to the “false dissident” Dobrica Ćosić: Kovač, Mirko. “Otac nacije”, published in the Bosnian and Croat *Dani* weekly in 2005, part 1 – 3.06.2005, no. 416; part 2 – 10.06.2005, no. 417; part 3 – 17.06.2005, no. 418; part 4 – 24.06.2005, no. 419, part 5 – 1.07.2005, no. 420; part 6 – 8.07.2005, no. 421; part 7 – 15.07.2005, no. 422.

The above factors make any discussion of emigrant literature in the context of Yugoslav and post-Yugoslav literatures especially complicated. All of them contributed to the lack of an unequivocal and precise connection between the term “emigrant literature” and political pressure, prohibition and ban; the semantics of the term shifted towards metaphorical senses still before 1989 (after: Walas). Works by twentieth-century émigrés-classics, setting out a certain tradition, already then applied this term as a category registering an existential escape to artistic freedom (Danilo Kiš), foreignness as a choice (Borislav Pekić) or an existential exile (Miloš Crnjanski), a kind of existential experience (not necessarily confirmed by the autobiographic nature of the texts themselves; I cover this topic in depth in the text: Nowak-Bajcar 2009), a category which according to Mieczysław Dąbrowski is the distinguishing mark of e/migrant literature after 1989.

Problems with the term “emigrant literature” in Yugoslavia and after and with its tradition in literary history, arise then from the unique path of development of Yugoslav literatures. Vinko Brešić points out the following characteristics of Croatian literature: a lack of the possibility of continuous development and defragmentation as well as factors which to his mind stem from the long period of “inexistence of the Croat national state” and from the fact that “the ethnic borders of the Croatian people do not correspond to the political borders of” Croatia (Brešić 179). The above observations, founded on the controversial premise of ethnic “purity”, at this level of generalisation, may be in fact applied to the historical situation of most counties, not only Slavic ones, in the twentieth century and before. However, it seems that it is not the above factors but rather a canonisation of a certain paradigm, status and scope of this phenomenon that determine the way of existence and viability of the emigration category in particular national literatures.

The literary paradigm under discussion developed in Polish literature in the nineteenth century and made its imprint on the treatment of this category after World War Two. Although all the Slav rebirth projects were developed in diasporas and in exile by emigrants (after: Dąbrowska-Partyka), an absence of a vibrant émigré community comparable to that of the Polish Grand Emigration whose legacy during Romanticism shaped both the model and the position of the “free” and patriotic paradigm of Polish emigrant literature, most likely affected the viability of this category in the twentieth-century literature in

Serbian and Croatian. Unlike for Poles, after World War Two emigration was not a consolidating factor, a potential pivot of a project of an image universe of each of the Slavic nations (as we know, for many Slavs this role was played by the myth of expulsion and displacement).

As a consequence, we cannot unambiguously identify the category of emigrant literature in post-war Yugoslavia with the “free” and patriotic paradigm. This was also due to the absence of the vibrant Serbian and Croat émigré movement with an impact comparable to that of the Paris-based *Kultura* magazine and of the Polish emigrants in London. However, in his article on the democratic opposition movement in Serbia, Nebojša Popov refers to the émigré union Oslobođenje (Liberation), set up in Geneva in 1949 and active in the United Kingdom until 1994. As of 1948 its members published in Paris, and as of 1958 in London, the *Naša reč* periodical. However, due to the limited scope of operation of this organisation, it cannot be compared to the activity of Polish emigrants (after: Radojević 2007: 118-135). Another factor which contributed to the fragmentation of the Serbian Diaspora was its political divisions.

We deal with a similar situation in Croatia. The magazine which consolidated the Croatian Diaspora after World War Two was *Hrvatska revija*, a periodical set up in 1928 as a monthly of the Croatian Motherland in Zagreb and continued its activity also during the fascist Independent Croat State (Nezavisna Država Hrvatska). While initially it was edited only by people connected with the fascist state (the reason why the activity of representative of the Croat Diaspora was taboo), it became more liberal as of 1954.⁵

There was also another factor which contributed to the lack of canonisation of the category of emigration in Yugoslav literatures. Although the Serbian and Croatian émigré communities attracted individuals of diverse political views, the stereotypical image of an emigrant as ingrained in the social consciousness of the time of Tito was negative. An emigrant was perceived as a nationalist: a Serbian

⁵ In 1941 the editors-in-chief of the periodical, coming out until 1941, were Vladimir Livadić and Blaž Jurišić. It resumed its operation in 1951 in Buenos Aires under the auspices of Antun Bonifačić and Vinko Nikolić, who took the effort to be its editors. After Bonifačić left for the United States, Nikolić, who had more liberal views, became the editor-in-chief. When in 1966 Nikolić moved to Europe, first to France and ultimately to Spain, the periodical published articles by representatives of many political circles and orientations, among whom there was e.g. Ivan Meštrović.

Chetnik and a Croatian Ustasha. After the wars ended, due to the mounting nationalist tendencies, the image was radically reversed: the emigrants were shown to be patriots, opponents of communism and its victims. Hence some political Croatian elites attempted to rehabilitate the Independent Croatian State, also by showing its duality. It was seen as a positively valorised implementation of the idea of independence to be set apart from fascism as the state's ideology and the manner of holding power in the country, which were considered as negative (after: Czerwiński 102ff).

The above facts, discussed in broad terms, prove that the activity of emigrant communities in both Serbia and Croatia calls for in-depth and detailed studies, free from simplifications and stereotypes, which will reveal the actual significance of these circles (and the individuals gathered in them) and their role (including that for Croatia's gaining independence).⁶ This applied not only to the emigration wave following World War Two, but also to the economic emigrations of the 1960s and emigrations following the reprisals after the so-called "Croatian Spring".⁷

The lack of canonisation of the notion of "emigrant literature" in Croatian and Serbian literature was also due to the fact that the accomplishments of the emigrant-authors following World War Two were not included into the canon of works ideologically and artistically relevant for these cultures.⁸

⁶ It is interesting to observe a statement of the Croatian writer Daša Drndić, who returned to Croatia during the last war after many years spent in Belgrade, although as she herself admits she did not experience anything unpleasant in Serbia and no one forced her to leave. In one of her interviews she observed: "I believe that if certain things had been accounted for in 1945, if questions connected with the Independent Croatian State and the Ustashes in Yugoslavia had been cleared up, they would not have raised their heads in the 1990s. I do not mean the Ustashes in the Croatian Republic, but those who were dispersed around the globe and began to return to their home country *en masse*. One should see, notice certain things and react. Naturally, this may take the form of an individual action but it should be supported by a certain project, the state, those in power [...]." (Drndić 2013).

⁷ According to Desimir Tosić, an activist of the Oslobođenje movement, the wave of economic emigration of qualified workers and intellectuals did not produce any political opposition; they were also under surveillance by the secret police and were under constant observation (Tosić 274-275).

⁸ The attempt to "restore" to the literary canon the writers excluded from it for political reasons was taken in Serbia by Gojko Tešić in the anthology *Utuljena baština* (Distin-

Yugoslav socialism, gradually transmogrifying since the 1980s into local nationalisms, led in the early 1990s to the disintegration of Yugoslavia. Having regained independence, the Yugoslav nations identified this nationalist change of course with “democracy”, while in Serbia and Croatia, additionally informed by the war, they were in fact other incarnations of totalitarianism. Since, as Slavenka Drakulić observes, “democracy knows no notion of a «dissident»,,, despite the guarantee of all civil liberties, full-fledged authors with an established position, although they never “had been” dissidents and although they officially “had not been persecuted”, were forced to leave the country among widespread nationalist zeal due to artistic isolation and the pressure of the community. I mean here Mirko Kovač, who as a 53-year-old left Belgrade in 1991 and settled down in Rovinj on Istria (he died in 2013). In 1992 the same step was taken by the 56-year-old Bora Ćosić, who now lives in Berlin and Rovinj, and Daša Drndić (b. 1946), a Croatian woman writer who left Belgrade during the war and returned to Croatia. Their departures were caused by the nationalist hysteria in Serbia, but was not limited to this country. The group of writers who left Croatia for similar reasons included: Dubravka Ugrešić (b. 1949), Slavenka Drakulić (b. 1949) and Predrag Matvejević (b. 1932).

The melancholy discourse of the Yugo-nostalgia emerging in the texts by the authors of this generation cannot naturally be perceived in terms of their naivety or unawareness of the oppressiveness of the

guished Legacy); the author indicated 23 names (after: Tešić 1990). Earlier, still in 1988, their names in a literary magazine were revealed by Predrag Palavestra (Palavestra 44). However, it is very telling that Mihajlo Pantić in a book dedicated to Serbian and Croatian short story of the 1920s and the 1930s supplements the “relevant bibliography” by only one author, Dragiša Vasić, a Chetnik activist. As to Tešić, he wrote as follows: “The «ideological purgatory» of the post-war years where the (extra)literary activity of those authors took place, had an impact on their biographies and their literature. [...] Therefore, *Utuljena baština* is not only a literary rehabilitation of a specific number of writers, but an invitation to what **should have followed it, i.e. the reading of these texts and the evaluation** (of the literary accomplishments – S.N.B.) of each of them” (emphasis – S.N.B.; Pantić 53). Biographies with a lexicographic presentation (also without an element of an artistic evaluation of the works) of Croatian writers doomed to oblivion earlier were presented by Vinko Grubišić. Although the activity of the authors connected with the Independent Croatian State was including into the history of Croatian literature by Dubravko Jelčić (Jelčić 1997), their selection, based on the criterion of ideology, is controversial (after: Kornhauser 133 ff).

Titoist system. A comparison may seem risky, yet I would call the above current of idealising Yugoslavia as the “country of childhood years”, a current that regards the collapse of the former homeland as an apocalyptic event, an end of a certain world of values whose image must be cherished and remembered, the “phantasm project”. In the case of texts by the above authors we deal with a return to the emigrant paradigm of the Enlightenment and Romanticism, implied by the situation of exile (or the place of domicile of the author or of the work’s origin) and charged with a system of certain civil, national and social liberties arising from the fact that the authors, by creating their microhistories, write in fact counter-discourses to the discourses of authority present in their homelands. In this function, as a symbol of resistance against the mounting nationalist hysteria of the states regaining or (as in the case of Macedonia gaining) independence after the collapse of Yugoslavia, the microhistories by post-Yugoslav writers involved a discourse of Yugonostalgia, which enveloped with oblivion all kinds of oppression generated by Titoism.

In this context, it is very much telling that the other, scary image of the SFRY was offered by authors who never decided to leave the country. They included, e.g. Dragoslav Mihailović, a former prisoner of Naked Island, a gulag set up by Tito, an author of publicist and documentary prose *Goli otok*, published since 1990, whose last part came out in 2012. These forms of remembering the trauma of the SFRY (their authors are, incidentally, closer in terms of ideology to the emigrants who did not return to their homeland following World War Two) depart from the vision of Yugoslavia cherished by those who were into Yugonostalgia. This “departure” should be seen rather tentatively, as both the literature by Bora Ćosić and that by Mirko Kovač (both given to the Yugonostalgia) still published in Yugoslavia in the 1960s included an element of a critique of Titoism, which the authors levelled by a variety of means: showing the tragicomic aspect of life in the SFRY (B. Ćosić) or its drama (M. Kovač). Therefore, the category of Yugonostalgia as a tool of accounting for the phenomena seen comprehensively and broadly, may spawn certain problems (after: Ślawska 2013).

We cannot disregard the fact that the game of remembering the homeland as a land of their youth and of forgetting the oppressiveness of the SFRY located these emigrants among those who used Yugonostalgia to further certain concrete political ends. One of them was Slobodan Milošević; his sentiment for Yugoslavia was evident e.g. in the

fact that after the regaining of independence by Slovenia, Montenegro, Macedonia and Bosnia, Montenegro and Serbia, as a joint state organism until 2003, was called the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Savezna Republika Jugoslavija⁹, which symbolically perpetuated the sense of continuance with the period before 1991, securing the position of Serbia as the follower of the Yugoslav project and – in the context of the last war – of the idea of Great Serbia.

Hence the overt abstention of the Yugo-nostalgic Croatian writers from the political aspect of Yugo-Slavism. The choices of the places of living were closely linked with the writers' profession and the chance to use their mother tongue. Having left Serbia or Croatia, they operate and "remain" in their old homeland, i.e. non-existent Yugoslavia. A departure is a kind of escape and a political gesture, allowing nonetheless contact with their own homeland and language, as can be seen in a statement made by Mirko Kovač, who explained his reasons for leaving Serbia as follows:

The circle of my friends in Belgrade was dwindling incredibly quickly. I avoided many of them, moving to the other side of the street. I no longer spiritually belonged to these circles. I could not possibly come to terms with the world of wartime phantasies and nationalist commotion. [...] I sought peace and quiet in a civilised spot **which would not sentence me to being an emigrant and to the experience of foreignness**. I needed some more solitude and an escape from politics but **not isolation, as it is deadly for the writer. I had to be close to all those dramatic events**. [emphasis – S.N.B.]

Not only does the above quote confirm that a departure from Serbia to Croatia (a transition within the space of the former Yugoslavia) was a manifestation of the rejection of the place of living but not of the homeland. It is also proof the "emigration", i.e. leaving for a place beyond the borders of non-existent Yugoslavia, would not be an experience of multiculturalism. On the contrary, to reiterate a statement by Kovač, it would be an "experience of foreignness", an "isolation that is deadly for a writer". Therefore, it is more justified to use my term the "phantasm project", which unambiguously comments on the nature of the attitude of those given to the Yugonostalgia to the SFRY.

An overt "abandonment" of readers and the community by renowned and recognised writers, for whom writing was a living, is the basic difference between the older literary generation of post-Yugoslav

⁹ Between 2003 and 2006 the joint state was known as Serbia and Montenegro (Srbija i Crna Gora).

emigrants¹⁰ and that of younger authors, including those who departed and were at the onset of their career trajectories (Vladimir Tasić born in 1965 and Nenad Jovanović b. 1973, both currently living in Canada, Mihajlo Spasojević b. 1974 living in the United States, Aleksandar Hemon b. 1964 – in the USA, Andrej Nikolaidis b. 1974 in Sarajevo, living in Montenegro and Saša Stanišić b. 1978 – in Germany). For them, departing from their home country was not a political gesture, although, similarly to the emigrations of older writers, they were provoked by the war. Rather than that, living abroad was underpinned by economic or psychological considerations (pursuit of stability and normality), a gesture of despair so that their writing should not be affected by any form of repression or stigmatisation.¹¹

¹⁰ This group included also David Albahari, b. 1948. In 1993 he left for Canada; this is what he said about the reasons for his decision: “When we left 15 years ago, always when I was asked about the motivation, I replied that this was because of my children. Such a decision was understandable; the kids were small and I felt the need to take them out of a place where it was not so good to be a child in. It was not good to be an adult there, either, but this applied especially to children. Our son completed his university studies in May, packed his things and returned to Belgrade. If my daughter returns as well, it would be absurd to let them live in Serbia while we continue living there (in Canada – S.N.B). When the kids finish their studies, my parental mission will be over and I see no reason why we should not come back to Belgrade, which I never left as a writer; I have never abandoned the language, either”. Albahari, David. “Nisam više dečak, sad sam beba pisac”. *Nezavisne novine* 07.11.2008, <http://www.nezavisne.com/umjetnost-zabava/pozornica/David-Albahari-Nisam-vise-decak-sad-sam-beba-pisac-31985.html> (access date: 11.05.2014).

¹¹ Studies of individual cases of selected authors referred to in this text can be found in the article by Giergiel (2009). The article tries to indicate categories conducive to describing emigrant literature. Its title correctly includes the term “problems”. As early as in its introduction the author points to the “ontic status of the writer and literature itself” as one of the aspects of emigrant literature. This status is based on the “sensation of not being at home in a world, which necessitates a constant critical reflection on its bases, mistrust of any a priori judgments and the capacity for a constant undermining of one’s own views. Such a deracination is an attribute of a thinking individual, a distinguishing mark of a true intellectual (not only of an emigrant, we should add)” (p. 67). The parenthetical inclusion at the end of the above quote indicates that the use of this category (naturally, not the only one used by the author) as a mark of emigrant literature (even narrowly-construed) is in fact impossible. If the discussion took into account texts written in emigration from totally different ideological positions, e.g. not cognitively sceptic, it might turn out that despite their being written outside the author’s homeland, they do not meet the criterion of being emigrant literature. Naturally, the problem stems not only from the arbitrary nature of the cognitive tools, but from the attempts at classification and description on the basis of a limited set of texts by (selected) authors.

The younger authors of post-Yugoslav emigrant prose find registering the experience of emigration more important than a political, external factor. The multicultural world of the former SFRY is not, as for the generation of older authors drawn to the Yugonostalgia, a space they identify with and long for. Yugoslav reality, which they usually saw as children, after the experience of the last wars, calls for a description and explanation, just like the new world they inhabited as emigrants. Inherent in these projects is the need to understand the world they left as young adults from the perspective of a mature individual. Their action is an attempt to respond to the question: "Who am I?"

It is precisely in reference to the younger generation of writers that Mieczysław Dąbrowski's notion of the "intertext" seems fully legitimate. This (most often autobiographic) prose demonstrated the need for a constant revision of one's identity through being the Other, both from the perspective of the culture left behind and the new one. We may safely say that the most recent emigrant prose is a record of identity *in statu nascendi*, a mirror where the self watches itself as the Other, not only from the point of view of different cultures but also from that of different stages of life (young and adult).

My above general assumption calls for proof which would be rooted in literary texts, for a detailed discussion and elaboration, which I abstain from here because of the constraints of this text. I put it forth, however, since it is vital as an indication of the uniqueness of the category of emigration in post-Yugoslav literatures. On the one hand, the assumption allows us to account for the problem of periodisation of a shift of phenomena (naturally in reference to the post-communist states, for whom 1989 is a transformation caesura; not for all, however, as the example of Ukraine indicates) mirrored in literature. On the other hand, or rather first and foremost, it demonstrates the need for revising the strategy of memory and forgetting, which will contribute to the coming to terms with the sometimes painful legacy of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

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OSTALGIA AND IRRETRIEVABILITY IN CENTRAL EUROPEAN CINEMA

Any discussion regarding the representation of the past in post-1989 Central European cinema encounters the issue of memory as one of the main organizational elements of a narrative. Modern historiography increasingly often poses the question “In what way is the past remembered?”, instead of asking the traditional question, “How were things really back then?”¹

According to Aleida Assmann, memory is not a monolith, which is perhaps why we should consider various forms of memories (1998a, 158). Individual memories create the memories of a collective, out of which cultural memory is constructed, which is, in turn, dependent on the media as carriers of memory as well as on institutionalized memory politics. Assmann emphasizes that remembering is a reconstructive process whose point of reference is the present (2009, 119). Practices of remembering have been influenced by forgetting, memory loss, distortions and misrepresentations (Assmann 2009, 120).

This last aspect is of particular importance to us, because nostalgia began to be experienced so intensely in countries of the former Soviet bloc that it found its reflection in public discourse as well as art. It has to be remembered, however, that this nostalgia is a damaged form of remembering, and, at the same time, it is a particular type of forgetting. This distorted memory of communism bears the name *ostalga*,

¹ Cf. (Wójcicki)

a term derived from the German language (*Ostalgie*) constituting a play on words *Ost* – East and *die Nostalgie*.

This concept appeared in Germany in 1992. It is said that its creator was Uwe Steiml, a cabaret artist from Dresden, who, in a television show, *Ostalgia*, entertained the audience with jokes about the recent East German past. However, it was not until 2003 that this term permanently entered public discourse after the premiere of Wolfgang Becker's *Good Bye, Lenin!*, a film based on these themes.

Initially, this term was employed to describe the problem of damaged memory in what once was East Germany, dominated by nostalgia of local socialism, but it soon became clear that this phenomenon could also be observed in other countries of the former Soviet bloc. Ostalgia assumed and still assumes various forms. The characteristic features of ostalgie memory are the following: selectivity, imprecision, incompleteness, imperfection. In effect, the kinds of memories that appear are those of prosperity, a sense of security, peace, and unshakeable order (Andrukhovych).

The reasons for selective memory²

The question that is invariably asked is the following: **What is the mechanism behind the appearance of the illusion** prompting citizens of post-communist countries to indulge in such nostalgic narratives, which, in many cases, contradict historical fact and sometimes even individual experience?

Yurii Andrukhovych observes that the reason for this confusion might be, among other things, the fixed control over information during the communist era in regards to the illusory success of socialist economy. The years of freedom following 1989 did little to negate the effects of this pervasive propaganda that forms the basis of a phenomenon which in Poland is called "Gierkonostalgia" and Yugonostalgia in the Balkans.

The selective nature of ostalgia leads towards forgetting. Simona Popescu, a Romanian writer and essayist, claims that ostalgia is forgetting (104). Popescu further indicates that this type of ostalgia affects those in her country who have erased the 80s from their me-

² The Hungarian historian and writer Béla Nývé emphasized the importance of the social and political context in which ostalgia appeared (Nývé 190).

mories and only remember their country from the 60s, when there was a sense of relative openness, liberalization and when the economic situation saw improvement.

Incomplete and selective remembering can also be the effect of radical social change, and this is precisely how we can characterize the experience of the Revolutions of 1989. Martin Šimečka, a Slovakian novelist and publicist, notes that a portion of his countrymen had

enough reasons to look back nostalgically at those times when their life had meaning, their social position was solid and the certainty that nothing will change was unmoved like a rock. That is the common key to nostalgia, which more than half of Slovakia feels, and not without reason. (114)

These comments are applicable also to the experiences of the Czechs, whose memory of their sense of stability and social security converges with their fear over the consequences of social transformation. As Svetlana Boym, a Russian slavist, aptly concluded, ostalgia becomes then “a defense mechanism against an accelerated rhythm of change and economic shock therapy” (273).

The unwritten “prohibition against mentioning socialism” after 1989 can also be seen as having a considerable role in the appearance of selective memory. As Šimečka observes, this prohibition results in false memories being constructed out of random elements, e.g. from reruns of decades-old television shows aired in post-communist countries, or from the presence of socialist pop music stars in the mediascape” (148). These false memories, claims Simona Popescu, could be construed as “bemoaning the loss of petty privileges” (98). Ostalgia can, therefore, be understood as an **answer to intensified disillusionment**. Frustration with the difficulties of the transformation reinforces the need for sentimental reminiscing.

Martin Šimečka believes that, in nostalgically reminiscing about the socialist past, a similar mechanism is triggered as the one accompanying nostalgia felt for one’s childhood, which did not have to be happy at all (132). There is a critical point of unpleasantness that cannot be crossed if the memory is to remain pleasant. In post-communist countries, there is no nostalgia for the times of Stalinist terror. Russia and Russian cinema deviates from this rule³.

³ Svetlana Boym, in her analysis of the state of Russian cinema beginning with the period of perestroika, notices two strong cinematic tendencies referring to the Stalinist

Let us shift our attention to who is susceptible to sentimental reminiscence. Of course, “the truly powerful **longing is felt by the privileged**” (Popescu 99), but the most popular form of longing in post-communist countries is the longing for “heroic survival”, which transforms the ordinary citizen into a hero appropriate to his times. The crux of nostalgia would then be the longing for an “ideal I” – a simple, unambiguous and, in a sense, innocent image of one’s self from those times.

It would seem that the largest group of people who experience pleasure at returning to the post-communist past are young people, who themselves have no memories of that era. This could be a signal that the memories of communism have been conquered, stemming from the conviction held by these people that it is “a closed era, definitively closed”, in which one can even find a “kind of charm (...) a type of <surreal> dependence” (Popescu 107). Young people view everyday communist culture as a kind of absurd local museum full of unbelievable curiosities. The older generations, on the other hand, reach for memorabilia from the Polish People’s Republic (PRL) only to:

(...) recall the times when they could only dream of the world that has finally come to fruition, but is still far from ideal version (...) of [those] dreams. (Smoleński 120)

As we can see, sentimentally recalling the past before 1989 can have a different intensity but also different causes. Poland, Hungary and also Slovakia are dominated by a more playful style of ostalgie remembering. The German discourse of memory presents a different aspect. The German historian Stefan Wolle drew attention to this, claiming that ostalgie coproduces, after the collapse of the nation, “an East German identity”.⁴ The unification of Germany entailed the necessity of abandoning the culture formed in East Germany, and yet it

past. A tendency appeared during the era perestroika which delineated “Stalinist kitsch” cinema as characterized by its eclectic style. On the other hand, in the mid-90s there appeared a nostalgic tendency replacing the playful carnivalesque engagement with kitsch. Less stylistically eclectic films searched for new ways of storytelling, but without demystifying Stalinism. Boym does not use the term ostalgie, proposing instead the term “Glocal nostalgia” for the Russian phenomenon. The standard example of this type of work was Nikita Mikhalkov’s films, especially *Burnt by the Sun* (1994) and *The Barber of Siberia* (1998). Cf. (Boymová).

⁴ Cf. (Wolle 25).

is impossible to function without a past. That is why the much-scorned elements of socialist material and spiritual culture have now assumed the symbolic role of representing a mythologized past. They became a weapon in the struggle of the "Easterners", who had to pay the price for this unification by being reduced to the role of second-class citizens, as unification came to mean mandatory and unequivocal assimilation of Western standards and solutions.

The importance of ostalgie memory in the eastern parts of Germany should not, however, create the impression that the ostalgie discourse is dominant in the German discourse on the past.⁵ It is seen to clash with an equally powerful call to hold accountable those people and intuitions who committed acts of injustices during the previous era, and thereby accentuates the terror, violence, constant surveillance, mass repressions, and also the collaborations in the totalitarian system of a huge number of East German citizens.

The question of what place is occupied by nostalgic reflection in discourses of the past in countries forming the post-Soviet bloc seems important enough to warrant its examination on the example of its presence in Central European cinema.

Cinema of sentimental reminiscing

It is interesting to see the extent to which the mechanisms of ostalgia have influenced cinema's discourse of the past that was brought about by post-1989 cinema. Undoubtedly, it was the earliest and most clear that it made itself known in post Eastern German cinema. The film that popularized the ostalgie trend was Wolfgang Becker's *Good Bye, Lenin* (2003), which in a symbolic way preserved the bygone world. It depicts a staunch communist who lapses into a months' long coma a day before the fall of the Berlin Wall. In the meantime, thousands of people living in East Germany rearrange their homes in a symbolic gesture mirroring the social changes. Christiane's children decide to create a kind of repository of communist-era relics in the room where she is bedridden, so that after awaking she would not suffer culture shock. With their increasingly absurd efforts they are attempting to reclaim the idealized image of their childhood world in

⁵ Ewa Fiuk, in her work on contemporary German cinema, avoids the problem of ostalgia when discussing the fall of the Berlin Wall. Cf. (Fiuk)

which not only their mother but also they themselves would feel safe and at home.

In his analysis of German cinema, in which the problem of the communist past is addressed, Hans-Christian Trepte identified social uncertainty following unification as the main cause of ostalgia (132). The need to “brighten the drab and grey reality” was, as Trepte claims, fulfilled by films such as *Go Trabi Go* (Peter Timm and Reinhard Kloos, 1990); *Sun Avenue* (Leander Haussman, 1999), *Heroes Like Us*, (Sebastian Peterson, 1999). According to Trepte, “Humor, infantilization, confusion, at times limitations, and an indulgence for East Germany are the characteristic features of the many films from that period” (81). What these films also had in common was the perspective of a child or adolescent narrator.

In 2004, RTL channel aired *Meine schönsten Jahre*, a series that eventually came to be regarded as the Eastern German equivalent of the American series *Wonder Years*. What connected these two culturally distant stories was the structure of the protagonist, a boy narrating a nostalgic coming-of-age story about childhood from his perspective as an adult. A child does not have to formulate judgments about reality, does not need to understand the world or analyze it with any depth. This strategy allows for the unrestricted idealization of youth, which is especially noticeable in *Sun Avenue*, a movie about the experiences of a group of boys who live next to the Berlin Wall. One of the characters in the last scene of the film declares that he would not trade his youth with anyone else. This conservative optics is readily employed not only by German ostalgie cinema,⁶ but it can also be found in Czech and Hungarian cinema.

Florian von Donnersmarck's *The Lives of Others* (2006), one of the best known and unfoundedly respected films in recent years, is a problematic case. The main character is a Stasi agent, who devoted his whole life to spying on a well-known dissident artist. At first the scrupulous officer carries out his duty, without any deeper reflection leading him to notice anything immoral in his actions, only to undergo an inexplicable moral transformation, which in effect convinces him to devote his life to rescuing his invigilated victim. The mawkish ending manipulates the ethical dimension of Stasi agents' conduct, proposing a relative evaluation of people working for that institution.

⁶ Cf. (Kledzik 99-109).

There is doubt as to whether we are still dealing with the process of “clearing up a bleak reality”, or perhaps we are witnessing a transgression of the acceptable limits of memory and crossing into manipulation and deception. This example illustrates that the ostalgie processes oscillate between mechanisms of subjective and imprecise remembering and procedures serving to manipulate these mechanisms.

Czech ostalgia

In the Czech reflection on ostalgie cinema, the assumption which has until recently dominated the conversation on this topic is that this phenomenon belongs to popular culture and does not take part in the discourse about the past. Today in the Czech Republic the question is asked to what extent can ostalgia be considered a phenomenon that co-produces post-normalized identity.

Ina Marešová claims that contemporary ostalgians hail primarily from the “Husákovy děti” (Husákovy children), who still remember well-stocked stores, supposedly no unemployment and homelessness, and also a colorful world of socialist pop culture celebrities.⁷ The Czech film critic Jaroslav Pinkas points out that the selective treatment of memories in ostalgie cinema leads to the elimination of memories linked to traumatic experiences.⁸ Although German nostalgic cinema constitutes the most representative form of longing for the socialist past, it is nonetheless only one of the trends in German cinema dealing with the East German legacy. In the case of the Czech Republic, the situation is different. Until recently, the majority of films about the past presented it through a nostalgic lens. The following films would attest to this observation: *Ta naše písnička česká II* (1990) by Vit Olmer, *Obecná škola* (1991) by Jan Svěrák, *Díky za každé nové rano* (1994) by Milan Steidler, *Báječná léta pod psa* (1997) by Petr Nikolaev (after a novel by Michal Viewegh), *Pelišky* (1999) by Jan Svěrák, *Rebelové* (2001) by Filip Renč, *Pupendo* (2003) by Jan Hřebejk, *Anglické jahody* (2008) by Vladimír Drha, *Občanský průkaz* (2011) by Ondřej Trojan. An interesting phenomenon is the television series *Výpravej*

⁷ Cf. (Marešová).

⁸ Cf. (Pinkas, 67).

(2009-?), which takes place at the beginning of 1964 and ends in 1989. No historical events, such as the Prague Spring and the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia dominate the show's plot which centers on the tribulations and joys of everyday existence in a socialist country. The barely visible historical context is accentuated in every episode by fragments of newsreel footage from that time, which had, as was the case in Poland, a propagandist character. Using them today as a source of historical knowledge may arouse bewilderment, as would the immense popularity of the series among Czech and Slovakian viewers.

These aforementioned films consciously trivialize the depicted reality, as the historical events they depict serve only as the background for the private ordeals of the characters, thereby silencing, to a large extent, the terror of the historical context enveloping the narrative.

Ostalgic cinema, which aims to maintain ideological neutrality, seeks justification for its negligence. The majority of Czech, German, Polish and Hungarian films of this genre are comedies, where the conventions of genre dictate the presentation of reality, even the most dramatic. The musical genre is also revived. Jan Hřebejk's *Šakali leta*, which takes place in the 1950s, and Filip Renč's *Rebelove*, which takes place in 1968, are both Czech productions. The conventions of the musical were deployed to protect the films from accusations to the effect that they were trivializing the world and lacked a historical vision. The tendency to escape to genre movies is attested by the Hungarian musical *Dollybirds* (1997) by Péter Tímár, which utilized the safe musical convention in order to invoke only the pleasant memories of the 1960s.

Hungarian ostalgia

Ostalgia can also be observed in Hungarian cinema, though the reasons for its existence there are not only akin to the German experience.⁹ According to Aleksandra Muga, ostalgia refers to the difficul-

⁹ Aleksandra Muga indicated films which made references in a sentimental fashion to the 1960s: *We Never Die* (1993) and *Samba* (1996) by Róbert Koltai; the 70s and 80s. *The Little Voyage* (2000) by Mihaly Búzás and György Pálos, *Moscow Square* by Ferenc Török (2001), *Forward!* (2002) by Dániel Erdély.

ties connected to the political transformation, the disillusionment in the present, which did not fulfill expectations. The most common object of sentimental reminiscence are the 1960s, a decade of relative prosperity in Hungary, which, in difficult times of unpopular transitional policies, could appear as socially friendly and economically secure (Muga 158).

Béla Nývé seconds Muga's diagnosis as follows:

Should we be surprised that, having had enough of the great historic march, many people long for the refuge of the past? To the world of summer romances and camping trips, weekend "gardening hobbyists" and the Eastern European "smuggling runs" in Trabants or Wartburgs, to the times when everything was still and, at least on the surface, more unified. The obvious, though satisfactory, compensation for the loss of freedom was the countless number of political jokes in radio cabarets. (194)

Polish recollection of the socialist past

It is interesting that films recollecting the socialist past as more entertaining than disturbing appeared sporadically in Polish cinema, and were usually shot by young directors: Oskar Kaszyński, who directed *Segment '76* (2002), Wiesław Paluch, who wrote *Motór* (2004). A particular example appears to be the Polish-Czech *Operation Danube* (2009) directed by Jacek Głomb. This comic history of a tank crew which took part in an invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 depicts their adventures as they took place in a small Czech town, with various references to the Socialist era TV series, *Four Tankers and a Dog*, and for the most part turned out to be an unfortunate and morally dubious endeavor. Intentionally or not, the descendants of those who participated in the 1968 occupation allowed themselves to use a frivolous and ribald tone towards one of the most dramatic experiences of our southern neighbors. The attempt to annex the characteristic (Hrabal's?) style of narrating dramatic, tragic, sublime experiences did not prove successful.

The relatively small presence of ostalgie tendencies in Polish cinema is balanced out by its strong representation in the media, e.g. in the visual representations in advertising and the Internet.¹⁰ Ostalgie representations can also include the various publications concerning

¹⁰ Cf. (Golonka-Czajkowska); (Grębecka); (Talarczyk-Gubała).

the Polish People's Republic (PRL), which focus on humorous and ironic descriptions of characteristic artifacts from that era.¹¹

Ostalgic films, which do not hold a significant place in contemporary Polish cinema, prove how cultural memory is created from marginalized resources, which can serve to build pop-cultural messages. This type of ostalgia can be seen as deriving from the assumption that the conscious unrepresentability of elements constituting the narration of the past takes on the form of a mere game. In accordance with the findings of Aleida Assmann, this type of cinema makes use of elements taken from discarded memories which now assume a new meaning. Objects and places have now become conveyors of a new memory, such as the eponymous "motor" in the Polish film as well as the fashionable living room wall unit, the Trabant in the German film *Go Trabi Go* the pickle in *Good Bye, Lenin!*, the space of the eponymous palace in the Hungarian film, which today is not called Muscovite but **Kálmán Széll**, or also the Dejvice district in Prague with the Social Realistic era hotel Intercontinental in *Šakali leta*. Recollected memories of objects and places from before this political turning point are subjected to a redefinition. As they are brought into a new, fictional reality of film, they no longer represent the past.

Irretrievability in cinema as a reaction to ostalgia

If ostalgia is built on sentimentality felt towards certain aspects of the past, the repudiation of ostalgia, which we shall call irretrievability, finds its roots in resentment to the equally selectively treated past.

Simona Popescu, in her search for a term to repudiate ostalgia, proposed the concept of "rebellious nostalgia"

Which does not insist (...) that we return to the past, but enables (you) to re-experience the time which was taken from you, retrieve everything: forbidden books, music, everything that was happening in the world during the 1980s but remained inaccessible. (103)

Her suggestion allows us to identify a phenomenon that we shall call irretrievability, which reveals itself in its disinclination to reminisce, in the escape from the past to the present, and in its ability to cap-

¹¹ Cf. (*Mała encyklopedia obciachu*) (Fragment of a supplementary text).

ture the darkest experiences of communism. Irretrievability is also characterized by selective memory, which asks us to focus on the flaws of the system and its consequences. Missing are often private memories, which in a direct manner would belie the nature of the system; instead the preferred memories are those that reinforce and reaffirm the practice of undemocratic systems: destruction in the mental and moral sphere, the spiritual and material paucity of the citizens, and finally, the demeaning tribulations of everyday life.

The Czechs say “film český je hešký” (a **Czech film** is a pretty film). It is precisely this uncontroversial “prettiness” that impressed the members of the Academy who awarded Jan Svěrák’s *Kola* an Oscar in 1996. The conciliatory spirit of the film was received by the Western audience with gratitude and relief. As a result, gates of European cinemas were opened to Czech films. Films by Jan Hřebejk, Jan Svěrák, and the earlier films by Petr Zelenka conquered the hearts of the European audience which had grown tired of Central European politically engaged cinema. And yet, Jan H. Vitvar, a reporter for the influential Czech magazine *Respect*, announced during the premiere of *Lidice* in 2011 the following: “The disgusting congeniality of our cinema is slowly leaving the stage”. For years Czech historians and film critics had been expressing their anxiety over the state of Czech cinema, which, in their minds, confined itself into a formula of ostalgie stories about the past. These films were safe, liked by the public, but increasingly revealing their exhaustion and banality. The last couple of years brought with them a more serious consideration of the Czechoslovakian past in Czech cinema. Instantiations of this new trend are films like *Kavasakiho Růže* (2009) by Jan Hřebejk, which joined the central European lustration discourse, or *Pouta* (2010) by Radim Špaček, which engaged in a kind of polemics with the German film *The Lives of Others*.

The developing considerations on the essence of ostalgie change the way the past is captured in central European cinema. Various artifacts from the socialist era now elicit stories about “how things were” in the manner of a Proustian memory triggered by eating a madeleine that evokes the bitter taste of the past. The absence of the contemporary perspective is characteristic here, as it allows the Czechs to view the era of normalization with distance and humor, and it derives from the knowledge gained later “that nothing really bad had happened, as everything turned out all right.” Discarding that corrective perspec-

tive allows us to segregate from our memories those and only those recollections.

In the search of films realizing the assumptions of irretrievability we should point to the **Ukrainian film** by Kira Muratova, *The Asthenic Syndrome* (1989). The image of moral and material destruction after communism here takes on a powerfully apocalyptic character.

The idea of irretrievability, i.e. renouncing sentimentalism in the way PRL (Polish People's Republic) is represented was manifested in Wojciech Smarzowski's film, *The Dark House* (2010). Smarzowski was able to capture a sense of authenticity and to evoke unvarnished recollections by almost triggering subliminal memories by means of the appearance of the characters, their behavior and way of speaking.

The idealized past is also discarded by two other films that share a similar style and themes: Slovakian *Music* (Juraj Nvota, 2008) and the Polish *All That I Love* (Jacek Borcuch, 2010). In the Polish film we have a young man who dreams of playing rock one day, which during the period of Martial Law in Poland was the embodiment of freedom. In the Slovakian film a slightly older protagonist indulges in similarly unrealistic dreams about being a real jazz musician. Although the plot structure lends itself nicely to nostalgic perspective, the directors were able to avoid falsely idealizing the experiences of the era.

Romanian New Wave cinema from the beginning of the millennium without a doubt demonstrates the aversion felt towards the dictatorship of Ceaușescu. The ostalgic trend seems to be absent from Romanian cinema. The strength of the kind of cinema that implements the idea of irretrievability derives from completely refusing to fetishize objects and spaces that had retained their repulsive dimension (e.g., Lăzărescu's home in *The Death of Mr. Lăzărescu* (2005) by Cristi Puiu, the grey streets of Bucharest, the interiors of the dormitory in *4 Months, 3 Weeks and 2 Days* by Cristian Mungiu).

12:08 East of Bucharest (2006) by Corneliu Porumboiu is a radical anti-ostalgic manifesto, whose topic addresses how the deceptive memories of the events of the revolution conspire to undermine the possibility of reflecting in a credible way about the past.

From this perspective, Juliusz Machulski's *How Much Does the Trojan Horse Weight?* (2010) is an interesting film. The film is a humorous critique of ostalgia based on selective memories and of the creation of phantasms of the past. Reflecting on memories of the communist past, realized here in a light comedic tone, can also be found in an inte-

resting documentary, *Welcome to North Korea!* (2009) directed by Linda Jablonská, a Czech director. This documentary is about a group of Czech tourists on a trip to North Korea. At first, they were curious and fascinated by a world which reminded them of their own country from decades back, but the ostalgie emotions with which they embarked on this journey to the past gave way to dismay. Instead of being a sentimental adventure, this trip back in time turned out to be a return to a nightmare, an expedition filled with horror, recalling the worst memories from the communist era Czechoslovakia. Yet another strategy of irretrievability was carried out by the Polish film *Reverse* (2009), directed by Borys Lankosz, which challenges the aesthetics of socialist realism that had by then become ostalgiezed in pop culture. Though the film is set in the 1950s, it dispenses with the typical 1950s background scenography in order to remove itself, by means of employing the cinematic tradition of expressionism and film noir, from the staid, stereotypical perception of those experiences.

* * *

Ostalgia and irretrievability are two strategies of employing memory for the purpose of organizing how we talk about the past in post-1989 cinema. Of course, I am aware that these are only ways of using memory in the cinema from the transformation period. Outside of the realm of interest here is the cinema reconstructing the past by means of historical sources and also “bunking history” or one realizing the current “historical politics”.

The cinematic portrayals of ostalgia, which are part of contemporary pop culture, play with elements that have been recognized, in the context of established conventions, as representative of the socialist era. What becomes problematic is when an ostalgie view of the past becomes an important, sometimes constitutive, element of identity discourse. The idea of irretrievability attempts to equalize recollections that generate idealized images which are products of nostalgic memory. The attempt to sever ties with the repressive past, thereby mitigating its traumatic image, can be rendered possible by an unresidential turn towards history. However, that sort of selective memory is implicated in the forgetting of the dangerously deforming registers of social memory. The answer to ostalgie phantasms takes the form of a cinema which accentuates the aversion to idealized images of the past.

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VINETA - THE LITERARY “LOST TERRITORY” OF WESTERN SLAVS? CONSIDERATIONS BASED ON CASE STUDIES OF SELECTED TEXTS IN WESTERN SLAVONIC LITERATURES

Over the emerald Baltic waves
an old settlement stood,
rich in glory, majesty and power:
Vineta, the miracle city.
(Waleria Szalay-Groele, *Wineta*)

This article will present a selection of texts using the Vineta motif in Western Slavonic literatures. In the case of Vineta (originally written as Jumne, Jumneta), we talk about a legendary, although possibly real city (see records in the chronicles of Adam of Bremen and Helmsold), luxurious and rich (Johann Gottfried Herder: „Slavic Amsterdam”); the city was most likely Slavic. One of the variations of the legend has it that the city was submerged by the sea as a punishment for the sins of its inhabitants (a travesty of the myth of Atlantis). According to a later version, to this day only people of pure heart, once every hundred years at that, can see the city and hear the toll of its bells. According to the latest research, Vineta is identified with the Island of Wolin, the settlement probably consisting of two parts: a Slavic one and a Viking town of Vikingborg, a.k.a. Jomsborg.

There is a rich body of texts about Vineta; the authors include scholars (Linkner 1982: 60–69) and popular writers (Kiersnowski (Błahij)); it has also become an attractive subject for non-Slavic cultures and literatures, primarily German. More than 250 texts have been written about Vineta, including six operas (Miciński), at least two novels, hundreds of poems and songs. The frequent occurrence of the Vineta motif in literature became an impetus for the development of several monographs, mainly in German (Koch) (Muller) (Pudor)¹, which summed up the extensive literary output on this subject.

The following reflections on the Vineta motif in Western Slavonic literatures will cover almost all the Western Slavonic literatures², i.e. Polish, Czech and Slovak. Apart from those major ones, there are also (or actually most of all) two „minor” Slavonic literatures, i.e. Kashubian and Upper Lusatian literatures and it is here that the most interesting phenomena occurred. However, the article will present only selected (subjectively: the most interesting) literary works in which significant and divergent processes of semanticising the motif under consideration has taken place in particular literatures.

* * *

Slovak literature is (geographically) the farthest from the alleged location of Vineta (i.e. today’s Wolin Island). The geographic aspect seems to have a decisive influence on the frequency of occurrence of the motif in respective literatures (a limited occurrence of the Vineta motif is also confirmed by Czech literature). Nevertheless, regardless of the problems with the unambiguous attribution of the literary works of Ján Kollár and Pavol Jozef Šafárik to Slovak or Czech literature (actually, the works we are interested in were written in Czech), it is in their works that the Vineta motif appears in areas inhabited by Western Slavs the earliest and it is from on their works that both Czech and Slovak writers would draw later.

P.J. Šafárik recalls Vineta in the third chapter of his seminal work on the history of the Slavs, *Slovanské starožitnosti* (Šafárik); a more scientific research is the text “O jménu a položení města Vinety, jinak

¹ In Polish literature, T. Linkner tried to develop the motif under discussion in numerous works (Linkner 1991: 127-144). Information about Vineta was disseminated among Kashubian readers of „Pomerania” by K. Derc (Derc) S. Gzella (Gzella).

² In this article I leave aside the smallest of the Slavonic literatures, i.e. Lower Sorbian literature, in which I have not found any literary work with the Vineta motif.

Jumina, Julina, Jomsburku”, in: *Časopis Českého Musea* XIX, 1845, p. 3–32), in which the scholar explicitly favours the Slavic rather than the Viking character of Vineta.

The wanderings of the protagonist of J. Kollár’s *Slávy dcera* (first edition in 1824) in the Slavic lands also lead him to Vineta, to which a sonnet in the second song was dedicated (*Labe, Rén, Vltava*)³. The presentation of the mythical city on the one hand emphasizes its magnificence and importance, and on the other hand – it is shown as „mořské Herkulánium”, undoubtedly Slavic, but unfortunately unhappy.

As for Slovak literature, mention should also be made of the idea of Vineta in the ode *Pohl’ed na Slovákov* by Ján Hollý (*Zora*, 1840, p. 39–48). The image depicted by the author coincides with the city’s famous image of the Slovak writers mentioned above. Like in Kollár, this motif illustrates the power of the Slavs. Both for Kollár and Hollý, Vineta functions as a Slavic „lost space”; it recalls and highlights the ancient magnitude of the Slavic tribes.

The presence of the Vineta motif in Czech literature is rather rare. The theme of a sunken Baltic city appears first and foremost in the poetry and prose of the second half of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. However, this motif was addressed by the greatest Czech authors of this period, primarily Svatopluk Čech (*Dagmar*) and Jaroslav Vrchlický (*Píseň o Vinetě*).

The Vineta motif (interchangeably as Volyň [i.e. Wołyń / Wolin]) appears in the second part of the „tale” (in essence it is an epic or a poem) *Dagmar* by S. Čech, in the extensive report of one Mr. Albert, giving a chronologic account of the city’s decline to the eponymous character (historical figure, Czech princess Márketa Přemyslovna, daughter of Přemysl Otakar I). Mr. Albert’s account is an apotheosis of the Pomeranian Slavs and the author interestingly introduces a narrative perspective of the Other (here Albert, a Dane), who, by reporting on past events, simultaneously reviews the history and the present day of the Slavs. In this perspective, *Dagmar* is not a work about Danes, but a story about Slavs living in a legendary city. Čech makes a „realistic” correction of the invariant of the Vineta legend: the disappearance of the Slavic flower-town („Slávy čarokrásný

³I used the third edition of the 1862 poem (*Ján Kollár’s Directory. Dil prvý*, Praha), where this subsection is numbered 42 (p. 97). This sonnet sometimes occurs independently as *Vineta*, cf. e.g. W.R. Morfill, *A Grammar of the Bohemian or Czech Language*, Oxford 1899, p. 140.

květ") was not due to the debauchery of its inhabitants („mythical" interpretation), but the effect of the Danish conquest, spreading Christianity in Pomerania. Simple people, loathe to believe in such a banal cause of the fall of the glorious city became the collective author of the „mythical" interpretation of the fall of Vineta. The Slavophile element, to a lesser extent a Nordic one, comes to the forefront, which is not surprising, given the overt and immanent Slavophile attitude of the author himself and of the whole generation centred around the *Ruch* magazine.

Píseň o Vinetě by J. Vrchlický, albeit not the poet's greatest accomplishment, became the most artistically mature poem of Western Slavs about Vineta. When working on it, the poet used both the findings of Slavic scholars (Šafárik, Kollár, Karel Jaromír Erben), German (Ludwig Giesebrecht, *Wendische Geschichten*) as well as Scandinavian records (*Jomsvikinger-Saga*, *Knytlinger-Saga*). The theme of the poem is Slavonic-Danish rivalry (between Vineta and Jomsborg). Against this background is born, comes to fruition and is brutally nipped the love of a young couple, Swana (Slavic) and Aki, son of Palnatoki (a Viking leader). Vrchlický thus decided to make a similar transformation of the Vineta legend to Čech, with the Nordic element providing the broad thematic framework. The thematic and narrative dominant of Vrchlický's work is the Slavs-Vikings antithesis, within which it is not the Slavic party but the Nordic one which is seen as positive. Vrchlický moreover significantly transforms the way the city disappeared from the earth's surface. Apparently, this did not happen because of the residents' sins or due to the intervention of the gods of the sea, as the classic version of the Vineta myth goes. Nor was it due to the betrayal of the native faith by the inhabitants of the city on the Baltic Sea. The actual perpetrators of the extermination of Vineta in the songs are the Vikings who, in an act of revenge for Aki's assassination, sink the city by opening a canal linking the city with the sea. This is the most advanced modification and demythologisation of the original Vineta motif in Western Slavic literatures. The poet's depiction of the lives and customs of the Slavs and the Vikings is also remarkable in the work.

Polish literature is the richest source of the Vineta motif from among all Western Slavonic literature. Vineta (Vineda) is mentioned by Hengo, a German merchant visiting old Wisz, in Józef Ignacy Kraszewski's *Old Tale*. J. Łuszczewska (Deotyma) writes in *Wyszymir*

(1860): „Not far from here there is a huge city, / by the name of Vineta; it abounds in dwellers, / The Dane was lured by the richness of the spoils. „(Łuszczewska 131–132). However, it was the literary era of Young Poland when the myth had its heyday. However, somewhat paradoxically, it was only Tadeusz Miciński who addressed it in the so-called Baltic tragedies (*Sunny King [of Hel]*, 1912; *The End of Veneta* 1910–1913; *Avenger of Veneta*, 1916) (Linkner 1994: 12–14), (Linkner 1987). During this period we can also encounter the Vineta theme in Rhapsodies (1901) by Józef Stanisław Wierzbicki (*Rhapsody II: Scary fisherman*), as well as in the historical novel *Ślawina. A novel set in the eleventh century* by Julian Baczyński (1904). The most interesting works dealing directly with Vineta theme in the interwar period include Ludwik Stasiak’s text *Veneda – a town at the bottom of the Polish sea* (1923) and the poem by Rajmund Bergel titled *The Sunken Settlement* (Bergel). A significant number of publications on this subject date back to the first decades after 1945, while the most widely discussed work of the Pomeranian Slavs was a narrative documentary by Zofia Kossak-Szczucka *The Troy of the North* (1960, Vineta is identified with Wolin here). This article will look more closely into T. Miciński’s *The End of Veneda* and Władysław Jan Grabski’s *The Earl Bronisz Saga*.

Micinski’s play long remained in the manuscript version, so his reception was (and still is) greatly limited. Veneta / Vineta was the setting of the second act, centred around the Slav temple of god Rujevit. The action is set in the twelfth century. A significant change with respect to the invariant of the legend was the location of Vineta not in the vicinity of Wolin, but on the Isle of Rügen; this identified it with Arkona and moreover took over its symbolic attributes. Veneta / Vineta (city) in Miciński’s drama was thus elevated to the role of a synonym of the (Baltic) Slavs threatened by Germanization (the sea). A city on a hill and at the sea, it represents the last bastion of independent Slavs, and at the same time is the Slavic Parnassus, a token of the author’s interest in aspects of paganism, native faith, and partly also Satanism. The novelty was Micinski’s highlighting the aspect of the German threat⁴ to the Slavs, the main theme of the Vineta motif in Upper Sorbian literature.

⁴ A similar message is conveyed by J.S. Wierzbicki’s aforementioned rhapsody *The Scary Fisherman* – one of Polish (literary) replies to the German *Drang nach Osten*. A much later literary version of the legend in Kashuby (S. Świrko, *About the Sunken Vineta*) is related to Wierzbicki’s rapsod by the motif of betrayal of some inhabitants of Vineta.

The Earl Bronisz Saga by W.J. Grabski, a nearly 540-page novel, was written during the occupation (first edition 1946–47), which translated directly into Vineta's vision presented in the work. The novel consists of three parts: *Betrothal in Uppsala*. *The Viking Trail*. *The Year One Thousand* and depicts the story of Bronisz, a Slavic equivalent of the Nordic earl (governor). Nordic references (not Vineta, but Jomsborg is the site of the events of the first chapter of the first part of the novel) do not appear in this work by chance, but their semantics contrast with the Czech elaborations of the motif. Grabski's novel is not an expression of fascination with (Čech), nor an apotheosis of (Vrchlický) the Vikings. The rise of the saga about the earl Bronisz was determined ideologically, in a two-fold manner at that. Firstly, Grabski's novel was to prove the Slavic (Polish) roots of Western Pomerania, thus opposing the use of the general Scandinavian (Aryan) myth and the Vineta myth by German historical discourse and literature. Thus, Vineta became for the author and, on a wider scale, for Polish literature / culture a „regained territory”. Secondly, the novel / saga was to be proof of the existence of an ancient, Scandinavian-like, literary tradition among Poles (Grabski). Similar attempts had earlier been made by J.S. Wierzbicki and Halina Ceysinger.

Kashubian literature⁵ is the closest, in the geographical sense, to the alleged or proven location of Vineta. However, the frequency of this motif in Kashubian literature is not as high or as interesting as in other Western Slavonic literatures. Vineta does not appear in the *magnum opus* of Kashubian literature, i.e. in the novel *Žěcé i przigòdë Remùsa* by Aleksander Majkowski (nor in any of his other works), which is a proto-text of Kashubian literature, and more broadly, of this culture.

Dagmar by Čech as well as the following piece by J. Bart-Ćišinski from Upper Lusatian literature come close to *The Scary Fisherman*, its motif of Vineta's collapse as a result of the spread of Christianity. Wierzbicki's rhapsody is an original example of a legend invariant, in which the sea consumes not only the city but also its captors.

⁵The most effective influence of the Vineta motif on other areas of Kashubian-Pomeranian culture is the opera of F. Nowowiejski *Legend of the Baltic Sea*, its libretto written by W. Szalay-Groele (world premiere 28.11. 1924, Poznań Opera). A significant change here is the location of Vineta in the lands of the Kashubs. When examining Vineta's relations with Kashubian culture, attention should be paid also to the reincarnation of its motif in relation to the construction of Gdynia; E. Kwiatkowski wrote that “the old legend of Vineta should return and become a reality, clad in the power of iron, concrete and stone, in a power of life and motion allowing it to last forever” (Samp).

Vineta was not popular, either, with other great Kashubian authors, unlike Arkona, which became the main „mythical space” for Kashubian literature. If it appears, it is to emphasize the ancient power of the (Pomeranian) Slavs. For example, the poem by Leon Heyke, *Dobrogost i Miłostawa*, mentions the name Vineta as many as three times, and in the same author’s *Kashubian Legends* (1931) it appears only once (Kęcińska).

The reason why geographic or even geo-cultural proximity has not translated into the popularity of Vineta in Kashubian literature seems simple: Kashubian writers have created their own myth about the sunken city, as evidenced in the Kashubian legends about the flooding of Old Hel Peninsula on the eve of Pentecost (see e.g. legends about Trzęsacz).

The most interesting realizations of the Vineta motif in the Kashubian literature are presented by S. Świrko, and probably the most interesting version is that about the sunken Vineta (Świrko) and (originally German) legend *Blind Stallion from Vineta* (Buczyński). Of particular note is the work by S. Świrko. In terms of using the Nordic motif, the *Legend About the Sunken Vineta* differs from the Czech texts by its negative Viking semantics, represented by Eryk, a Viking earl and the fiancé of a Slavonic rulers’ daughter. It does not resemble the noble gentlemen Albert and Palnatoki from the works of Czech authors – Eryk is a traitor of the alliance between the Vikings and the Slavs, partly responsible for the death of the father and brother of Diwa, his fiancée. Finally, in agreement with greedy merchants and urban traders, he opens the Vineta gates to the Vikings, causing the collapse of the city. The story has an original ending: Diwa turns out to be a descendant of her namesake, fairy Donna (interesting parallels to the „mořské ženy” in the Čech epic), the patroness of the city. At the moment of the enemy’s forced entry to Vineta, the maiden utters an ancient spell, through which the goddess saves the city, plunging it into the sea abyss. This is the most effective example of interpreting the Vineta motif in the „Slavonic” spirit: the bravery, nobility, courage of the Slavic inhabitants of the city take precedence over other thematic components (especially the Nordic one).

A geo-cultural position similar to Kashubian literature / culture is held by Upper Lusatian literature / culture (the term used here in the national sense), but it differs significantly in the valorisation of the Vineta motif. First, we encounter it in a much larger number of works

than in Kashubian literature; secondly, it is more complex because Vineta's popularity is confirmed by both Upper Sorbian literature and the texts created after 1945; thirdly, the prestige is different as the motif was addressed by the most important Upper Lusatian authors (Handrij Zejler, Jakub Bart-Ćišinski, Angela Stachowa).

A characteristic feature of the development of the Vineta motif in Upper Sorbian literature is the generic and thematic diversity and the presence of the motif on a much broader, cultural level. This is a process, the most interesting in the Western Slavonic literatures, of semantising the motif: here Vineta itself, a Baltic city and as depicted in the other Slavonic literatures, was identified with the whole nation and its fate. The most interesting literary works taking up the Vineta motif from Upper Sorbian literature are: Korla Awgust Fiedler's poems *Vineta*, H. Zejler *Što je Serbow wótcny kraj?*, J. Bart-Ćišinski's *Vineta*, a story by A. Stachowa titled *Vineta*, and a manga by Katrin Beserec titled *Vineta. Město wuhnatych* or *Vineta. Město wugnańcow*.

In Zejler's poem *Što je Serbow wótcny kraj?* (1839) Vineta was presented as one of the limits of the „Upper Sorbs' home country.” The Lusatian Serbs' homeland coincides with the area occupied by the Slavic tribes, spreading, according to the poet, on the one hand from the Black Sea to the Ice Sea and on the other – from the Baltic Sea to Kamchatka. Vineta is therefore thoroughly Slavic, an important frontier point of the territory occupied by the Slavic family. In this respect, all Upper Sorbs works oppose diametrically Czech and, partly, Polish (Grabski) texts since the Nordic element does not appear in any of the works in which Vineta appears. Zejler's poem was based on (an unspecified) German prototype derived probably from the so-called *Lyrrik der Befreiungskriege* (1813–1815), in which the nationalist pride and the emergent German nationalism and expansionism strongly resonated. Irrespective of the intertextual context of the work of the „father” of Upper Sorbian literature, the text became an unquestionable indication of the Sorbian's involvement in the cultural circle of Slavs.

Unlike Zejler, the Vineta motif was used by K.A. Fiedler in a love poem of the same title (originally in *Łužičan* 1868), for the sole purpose of presenting the love theme. Vineta, and especially the secret word, which according to one of the variants of the legend can yank it out of the sea, was identified with the will to arouse love in a woman. Fiedler's poem, instead of national and Slavophile function, uses the Vineta theme for the purpose of conveying a universal message.

The most important application of the Vineta motif in the Upper Sorbs poetry is presented by J. Bart-Ćišinski's *Vineta* (originally in: *Łužica* 1899). It opposes earlier versions not only because it is definitely the best artistic achievement (written by the greatest Upper-Sorbs poet). Here Vineta in the poet's version is not a „defensive settlement” of the Pomeranian Slavic tribes, but rather a „god” of the Sorbs themselves, and is sunk by the sea not for the sin of debauchery (which is a travesty of the biblical motif of Sodom in the classic motif), but because the Sorbs had rejected the faith of their fathers and adopted – under the influence of Germans – Christianity, which is a partial convergence with Čech's *Dagmar* tragedy. The influence of the Slav element in the Upper Sorbian studies of the Vineta motif is confirmed by the fact that the destruction of the Upper Sorbs, i.e. pagan Slavs as a result of the rejection of native beliefs, was presented by the ultra-dogmatic Catholic priest Bart-Ćišinski. The sea, which floods the Lusatians' Vineta is the Germanic sea, hostile to the Slavs, which in turn binds the poem by the classics of Upper Sorbs literature with Miciński's drama in question.

The short story *Vineta* (1983) by A. Stachowa tackles the love of two teenagers in a village in Upper Lusatia, destined for liquidation for the sake of an open-pit lignite mine. Unlike the overwhelming majority of Upper Sorbian prose (Derlatka 2004), the story is negative: the ending of the story confirms the state of affairs – the narrator (a car driver) cannot get to the village he visited a few weeks before because no one lived in it. Due to the construction of the lignite mine, the residents were forced to leave their family homes. As in *Vineta* by Bart-Ćišinski, Stachowa's *Vineta* identifies with the legendary city the entire Sorbian minority (the village functions as a *pars pro toto* for the minority). Apart from the different generic form, the two works differently semanticise the sea that flooded the Vineta of Upper Sorbs. In the text by Stachowa this is not a Germanic sea, but a sea of socialist industry, which forever changed the landscape of Slavic Lusatia. It is a very bitter re-valuation: it is socialism, the system that was to guarantee to the Upper Sorbs smooth development (the new socio-political configuration after 1945 was described in the native discourse as „jutry Serbow”) caused the shrinking of their living space, then its planned destruction and consequently – the de-nationalisation.

The most recent literary work in Upper Sorbian Literature which uses the Vineta theme is the manga *Vineta. Město wuhnatych* (2008) by

K. Beserec. This work exemplifies the changes taking place before our very eyes within the (broadly understood) Upper Sorbs culture. In the song about the love of young people, Jumne and Varro, inhabitants of unfriendly islands who for the sake of love overcome mutual prejudices, we should indicate a complete lack of references to the Slavic element, apart from the name of Jumne. This reflects the cultural process that took place in the Upper Sorbs culture since 1945, which culminated, it seems, after 1989. This is the process of the disappearing Slavic identity, which in the nineteenth century was the basis of identity, and in the first half of the 20th century served as a guarantee of survival in the face of nationalism (Derlatka 2007, 2009). After 1989, the declarative Slavophile attitude on the part of Upper Sorbs disappeared and is maintained only privately and in the family.

* * *

The Vineta motif, the legendary or real Baltic Sea city of the Slavs („Slavic Atlantis”), appeared in most Western Slavonic literatures. Its highest frequency was undoubtedly in Polish literature, and the lowest in Slovak literature, with particular emphasis on the „minor” literatures of Western Slavs, i.e. Upper Sorbs and Kashubian, where phenomena on the literary and cultural level were most prominent.

One can discern substantial differences between the above literary works applying the Vineta motif in Western Slavonic literatures. For example, Czech literature highlighted, in addition to the Slavonic element, the dominant feature of other Western Slavonic literatures, the Nordic feature, positively valorised, especially in Vrchlický. In turn, in Polish literature, the Nordic Vineta motif, unambiguously identified with German expansionism, becomes negatively valorised. In Upper Lusatian literature, the element of the legend of the sunken Vineta city does not appear at all.

The most numerous, most varied (as to genre and them) representations of the Vineta motif can be found in Polish literature. Literary reasons for the interest of Polish authors in the motif of a sunken city on the Baltic resulted, especially in the first period, from the interest of representatives of Young Poland in Slavonic mythology. The ideological emphasis of the Slavic identity of the sunken city, as attested in Polish literature, had a two-pronged tangible objective. Firstly, to politically offset German claims to Jomsborg (literary works until 1945), depicted by literary works; secondly, it was to legitimise Po-

land’s rights to the regained territories of Western Pomerania (successive literary and popular works after 1945).

Kashubian literature was the only Western Slavonic literature which created a mythopeia about sunken cities, whose main motif was the destruction of the „Kashubian Sodom”, i.e. Old Hel Peninsula by the Baltic (a variant of a legend about the fate of the church in Trzęsacz).

By far the most interesting travesty of the Vineta motif in Western Slavic literatures is one of the variants found in Upper Sorbs literature (J. Bart-Ćišinski, *Vineta*; A. Stachowa, *Vineta*), where Vineta encapsulates the entire Sorbian minority. A. Stachowa’s story moreover provides a bitter re-evaluation of the nationalist Sorbian ideology – of an „island on the German sea”: the sea that finally flooded Vineta – a minority was not an eternally hostile Germanic sea, but a sea of socialist industry.

Of all the Slavonic literatures, aside from the initial texts by Kollár and Hollý, Slovak writers, only in Upper Sorbian literature does Vineta become a full-fledged „lost space”. In Polish literature, in turn, the sunken Slavic city became a specific „reclaimed space”, especially in literary and popular literary works created after 1945. The common denominator of all Slavonic literatures is the subordination of Vineta to another significant *locus* of Western Slavs, i.e. Arkona.

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OF NON-PLACE: SPATIALITY IN ÁDÁM BODOR'S FICTION¹

The concepts of “imagined worlds” pervading and creating Ádám Bodor’s literary universes, despite their various constructed fictional realities, are brought together by a particular relation, a type of intellectual kinship in the unique way of space is approached. Space, which, instead of being one of the constitutive components of the textual world – in accordance with classic precepts of a literary work – here becomes the main axis, the central point, the primary “value-creating” category². In Ádám Bodor’s prose the unique role played by spatiality is related to yet another of the author’s initiatives: the place, in which his stories take place, does not exist in reality. The neologisms used to name these places, settlements, lodgments, watchtowers and mountain chains discretely suggest the type of space mentioned, so

¹ This research has been financed by The Ministry of Science and Higher Education as part of a program called “National Program of the Development of the Humanities” in 2012–2013.

² The analysis of the concept of “space” and its significance for literary and cultural studies are presented such works as *Space and Place* (Yi-Fu Tuan 1987), *Przestrzeń i literatura* (*Space and Literature*) (Głowiński 2007), *Przestrzeń w kulturze i literaturze* (*Space in culture and literature*) (Borkowska 2006), *Przestrzeń i rzecz* (*Space and Thing*) (Toporov 2003), *Czas i przestrzeń w prozie XIX i XX wieku* (*Time and space in 19th and 20th century prose*) (Niedzielski 1990).

that these geospatial/geopoetic journeys into the texts are directed and thereby marked by a significance derived from cultural memory about spaces in which these plots unfold.

What exactly is the mountain pass like?

Györgyi Fodor, analyzing the construction of Bodor's magical world and the adaptation of his novel in her essay *Az érsek szava* (*Archbishop's Word*)³, points to the basic condition of how his work is received, which is based on the "reader-tourist" being treated as someone who skillfully decodes the encrypted world of symbols and metaphors entwining the author's textual universe.

If we were to present Ádám Bodor with a random image of the world, he would have to immediately blur its borders and rename the mountain ranges in a way that would make them understandable to everyone and everywhere, and then he would have to sprinkle them with magical language, perfectly intelligible to any reader-tourist, for whom even the smallest real piece of information makes no difference. (Fodor 2009)

Fodor's observations compel us to pose a question around which the poetic world of Bodor's prose revolves: in what way should the artist create space so that it would transcend the hitherto limited role of cinema scenography towards a full-fledged, culturally significant material, one that subordinates the thought of one's own tradition, history and even national/European imagination?

Ádám Bodor chooses in his work the liminal space of the Gyulai Mountains [*Gyulai havasok*]⁴, which is concealed under the imagined

³ This is in reference to the film *Dolina* directed by Zoltán Kamondi from 2007. Ádám Bodor, in an interview he gave for *Székelyföld*, mentions the significant difference between the work of the director in adjusting the text to the language of film and his own concept of the novel, which is, for the most part, an individual, private image. "The work of the director is for the most part more controlled and direct than mine. For instance, he sees dictatorship in terms of its overt violence, whereas I see it in the painful pressure on the ribs". Ne kíméljük az olvasót, ha már... (Beszélgetés Bodor Ádám íróval). (Zsigmond 2006). Bodor's work has been adapted to the silver screen many times. In 1972 there appeared the film *Forró vizet a kopaszra* (*Wrzątkiem w tysego*) directed by Péter Bacsó (script: P. Bacsó, P. Zimre), in 1973 *Plusz-mínusz egy nap* (*Plus minusz jeden dzień*) directed by Zoltán Fábri (script: Z. Fábri, P. Zimre) and *A részleg* (*Wydział*) in 1994, directed by Péter Gothár (script: P. Gothár and A. Bodor).

⁴ Góry Gyulai [The Andrassy Mountains, The Gilau Mountains] - a mountain range in Western Romanian Mountains located in Transylvania.

name of "Sinistra Zone" and "Bogdanski Dolina" (*The Archbishop's Visit*). "The only place that can be found on a map is the Pop Ivan mountain range and it is, more or less, in their vicinity that most events in my work take place", claims Bodor in an interview in *The Smell of Prison* (2001) – "it is generally there where I based the plot of my histories" (Bodor 2004: 170)⁵. His childhood "fairy-tale land" of Transylvania, known for its multicultural wealth of languages (Hungarian, Romanian, Ukrainian, Swabian, Serbian), is presented in these novels as a hermeneutic space, inaccessible to random wayfarers ("detainees") (Bodor 2001: 109), and all of the natural cycles and universal (humanistic) values are radically disturbed and even irrevocably degraded.

Bodor's characters have no difficulty noticing the changing seasons, because their existence is limited by the presence⁶ of specific species of birds (waxwings, wild geese) or the blooming of plants and is limited only to several days and even a few hours: "A week or two earlier the mountain ash trees still held their clusters of fiery red berries, but by now only denuded branches remained: the waxwings, which feed on the berries, had arrived, driven here by the piercing winds up north" (Bodor 2001: 45). Certain states of nature are not subject to cyclical transformation, Andrej Bodor, the protagonist of *Sinistra Zone* who bears the author's surname, is surprised to notice that the traces he made years ago in the snow with his skis are still visible to the naked eye, even though, in accordance with the processes regulating the circulation of matter, they should have melted long ago:

All at once it hit me that these were my own old ski tracks. Left over from the final winter I'd spent here in the pass, they snaked their way through the incandescent spring grass and, finally, into the darkness of the forest [...]. Even once such a double set of tracks melts, an impression is left behind, a silky, silvery sheen that fades entirely only by early summer. Sometimes it never does (Bodor 2001: 18).

The reverse side of all these disturbances of the natural cycle stimulating the world of nature is indeed the disarray of the states defining the existence of all the participants of this space. The existence of

⁵ Bodor points to one other geographic name – Dobrin Peak. In *Sinistra Zone* this name is used to refer to a series of forest houses located in a reservation, inhabited by the characters of the novel and called jokingly "Dobrin City" (Bodor 2001).

⁶ With the exception of the world depicted in Bodor's last book, *Verhivina madarai* (*Birds of Verhovina*) where the "absence of birds" is significant (Bodor 2014).

characters exceeds or even defies their own, inborn limitations – you can die because of rain and the dead can be resurrected by means of simple restitutorial activities. Bodor writes as follows about Coca Mavrodin-Mahmudia, Colonel Borcan's successor:

Having dozed off in the woods, she was caught unprepared by a freezing rain, and, motionless, like a sleeping moth, she froze into a crystalline mass under the ice. Later the wind tipped over this block of ice, which broke to pieces and melted. (Bodor 2001: 51–52)

Changes occurring within the confines of the characters' *habitus* also affect the basic instrument shaping their mutual relations – verbal and nonverbal communication. Coca Mavrodin informs the inhabitants of Dobrina of her decisions, ordering ribbons with orders to be placed on the trees and bushes, but for understandable reasons they rarely reach the addressees. Meanwhile, Andrej Bodor, in search of his missing son, Béli Bundasiana, finds out where his son is thanks to a microscopic sign: “a note etched with a needle onto a coin dropped into my mailbox” (Bodor 2001: 33). The obvious translocations in human behavior, reactions, moral and ritualistic stances are, therefore, predicated on excluding or disturbing the existence of the characters from the series of processes shaping and regulating their existence and they have an inextricable link to the obligation of being present in certain spaces, which in a visible, though inexplicable way, shapes all the manifestations of their lives. According to Kornélia Faragó (*Szituatívó térszerkezetek. A dinamikus-poláris formáltság – Situational Constructions of Space: A Dynamic Formation*), analyzing the dynamic and polar formation of spatial relations in *The Sinistra Zone*, the space in which Bodor's characters can exist is extended with elements which create the impression of regularity: “going on the road, the state of ‘being on the road’, arriving at the destination, waiting, observing the terrain, meeting or, for example, death”. All these activities, as well as verbal communication, reveal themselves, according to Farago, through contextual, random evocations of space, which is never presented in its entirety, but as a fragment, supplemented and suggested by the context of a statement or a detail. It is, therefore, an accompanying space, present in an only situational manner (Farago 2001: 129).

It should be remembered that, despite functioning as “scenography” in Bodor's fiction, space is not devoid of the author's distinct reflection, which would allow us to talk about the fictional phenome-

non of nature. According to Enikő Boros (*A Sinistra körzet motívum-hálója – A web of motifs in Sinistra Zone*), it can be described as an archetypal, on account of a particular type of “melting”, mutually intertwined “perspective from which Bodor asks us to observe the nature of the existence of primordial, communal influence: the magic of nature is connected with attentively becoming one with her” (Boros 101). Creating mysterious lands, which does not have its own counterpart in the reality outside the text is, according to Boros, a display of a primal desire to return to communal harmony, to a spatial refuge, where the natural order and everyone inhabiting it can constitute a particular kind of agreement, unity. It is worth reiterating the claim put forth by Margit Ács:

Existing in nature is a kind of archaic communal form of co-existing with nature, which presents itself in the existential impressions stemming from the unconsciousness, where the archetypal, demonic image of an ‘endless forest’ has not yet reached (Ács 1880).

This archetype can be treated as a metaphor of the universe, a symbol of primal strength that subordinates the universe. According to Boros, the decomposition of unburied bodies, which can be treated as a disturbance of the moral order, is at the same time a representation of the lost, though in a certain way desired, connection with the elements which eventually consume all matter.

Sinistra Zone is ruled by antique, cosmological principles: the four elements of earth, air, water and fire, as well as natural substances under constant change: rain, ice, fog, mud, snow, sunlight and clouds. The essence of man (*humanus*) is identical with its sphere of being. Along with the passage of life, it undergoes a natural transformation. Man is not a person, but a kind of “individuum” co-existing with nature, and the natural elements exist on in its corpse. (Boros 101)

The body of Coca Mavrodin melts along with the snow, thus becoming a part of Dobrinski Forest, and Colonel Borcan, who had been eaten by an animal, returns to the elemental order of nature, building the universe by returning to it.

Universalizing the space of the world of the “gulag”

Thinking about space becomes in Bodor's work a new category – “thinking spatially”, which is the most important symbolic language universalizing the textual message. The hidden motivation of the

writer, revealing itself in stripping proper names of their real meanings, serves above all to speak about the fundamental problems of existence and, even if we notice geographical markers, to aid in the identification of places described in the author's books with their real counterparts, the first reaction of "the reader-tourist" should be a journey into the depths of the essence of man and his social conditioning and a comparison, or a critical analysis, of the metaphorical blueprints form the book with their real prototypes.

What also warrants the journey is the hidden structure of the fictional world, which, under its aesthetic layer of "magical language", conceals carefully considered matrixes of a world steered by the mechanics of power. In *Sinistra Zone*, the military is in charge (first Colonel Borcan, then Coca Mavrodin), in *The Archbishop's Visit* it is clerics. None of the residents of Dobrina or Bodganski Dolina are in full command of their lives. The characters seem to have a "transitory" or "temporary" identity; each of them is only a "newcomer", "wayfarer", who was allowed for some time to live in this "non-place". Having no sense of attachment to the space in which Bodor develops the fictional lives of his characters is tied to the inevitable inner distinction of the fictional world between what is "inner/outer" and ours/other⁷.

This distinction is not, however, free of the weight of historical consciousness held by even the most isolated "reader-tourist". The situation of temporary presence in a closed world, which never becomes a homeland, is in the twentieth century a living metaphor of living in Central-Eastern Europe. In Bodor's novels, being in a space, the right to live in Dobrina is manifested by one visual sign: every resident has a metal plate around their necks with an, often incorrect, engraved name and surname. None of the characters who had forfeited their right to live in Bodanski Dolina or in Sinistra ever return.

Perhaps it is by merging the two cognitive perspectives: "metaphorical" (fictional) and "real" (realistic) and by preserving the natural territorial/spatial tension inscribed in the existence of people occupying borderlands that has allowed the writer to create a type of space which we today treat as ideal and iconic in discussions of the

⁷ Kornélia Faragó employs a differentiation based on issues of the visible, the Sinistra world and its terrain belonging to it, but appear in the accounts of visitors; hence, the division between "presence/being" [*jelenlét*] and "absence" [*távollét*], between which complicated, mutually intertwined life relations are played out (Faragó 2001: 134).

image of Central-Eastern Europe. A careful reading of Bodor's "magical language" will make it clear to the reader that Bodor is not using it in order to reinforce the power of his "imaginative concoctions" and "authorial hallucinations" – in the style of French magic realism – but as a sign of an alternative search for a new language, one which would be able to lift not only the memory of an ideal childhood but most of all a mature consciousness 'gulag-like' world (Bodor 2004: 16).

As far as the borderland is concerned, it is clear. It is no coincidence that it is so often the backdrop of my stories. It is usually the case that borderlands are usually more interesting than the center of a country. It is a magical, mysterious space, a place of risky encounters, where the scenery and the whole surroundings are marked by a state of tension. Europe's eastern border was a space cordoned off by drawbars and barbed wire, a place prickling with guard towers and cut by moats, where even a gliding bird was considered government property. (Bodor 2004: 12)

All the disturbances of norms, from the moral, cultural to the natural, serve only to express the ineffable absurdities of existence in places cordoned off by barbed wire, in the space of totalitarian regimes, and also those with artificially established territorial borders, which have often divided in half streets, houses, not to mention border towns. Despite the validity of the above judgments, Bodor is far from treating his own work radically material created in order to successfully expose the truth of political lawlessness and spatial ghettos. The writer concentrates instead on the arbitrary category of border and liminality – not only spatial, geographical, but, most of all, existential, intellectual, and moral. For Bodor, the basic condition and motivation to write is the need to freely create reality in which inevitable associations with an outer textual reality should accompany the reading, but should in no way dominate it.

The Poetics of the Provinces and a Shard of the Trianonic Glass

The strange web of binary oppositions building Bodor's fictional world is not without a nationalistic element, i.e. Hungarian. Critics of the writer's work have drawn attention to those elements of his stories, which can be read through the lens of Hungarian history and tradition. According to Péter Szirák, the author of *A regionálitás és*

*a posztmodern kánon a XX. századi magyar irodalomban (Regionality and postmodern canon in twentieth century Hungarian literature), "Transylvanianism" "is a category that is derived especially from the situation of ethnic minorities, who, in their attempt to understand their spiritual-moral totality, turn it into a kind of survival strategy"*⁸.

Szirák defines the concept of "Transylvanianism" as an ideological construct describing various representations of Hungarian minorities, who, as an ethnic totality, have retained their literary/cultural independence thank to their ability to co-exist peacefully in a multicultural world with other nationalities inhabiting Transylvania (Szirák 40).

Bodor, who places in these stories representatives of nearly all the nationalities when building the multicultural melting pot of Transylvania, faithfully represents the mood rich with history of "one of the most unique provinces in Europe", which he claims could be a metaphor for the whole of Central Europe. The multicultural mosaic created and brought to life by Bodor is a modern attempt at consolidating the traditions of Transylvania, though devoid of a mythologizing element, which the writer avoids. Not without reason does the magical language of the novel accompany the descriptions of dirt, rottenness, stench, corpses, defecation, foul smells "mountains of death" (Bodor 2002: 7), which become the negative, naturalist background of all of Bodor's stories. Symbolizing the post-Trianonic territorial breakup:

That something horrible had happened was evidenced by the horrible stench of hundreds of destroyed outside toilets, which was lifted around the area. In a few hours of the black like sot night, when all the people – as they say – were sleeping, Bogdanska Dolina crossed to the other side of the river. To another country. (Bodor 2002: 15)

Bodor is consistent in representing an honest account of Transylvanian reality, burring it deep in the bitter hopelessness of an exist-

⁸ In his comprehensive study devoted to the topic of "regionality/regionalism", Szirák draws our attention to the basic components of space and regional identity and points to the significance of "peasant movements" [*népi mozgalom*] for the history of political, cultural and literary ideology. He emphasizes the significance of peasant discourse [*népi diskurzus*] and (post)romantic, modernist identity [*(poszt)romantikus nemzeti identitása*]. The formation of what is called "Transylvanian thought" [*erdélyi gondolat*], which became the "central point of the discourse creating ideology" of this region, led through years of literary and identity transformations to the birth of the category that is today called "Transylvanianism" (Szirák 40).

ence devoid of any perspective, in confined spaces, which exacerbate the feeling of isolation, with no hope of progress. Györgyi Pozsvai, the author of a monograph devoted to Bodor's work, analyzes the meaning of space in *Sinistra*, reading all the etymological hints included in the names of this fictional "non-place". For Pozsvai the Latin root word should be treated as a symbolic harmonization of mental ideas: "the image of ominous evil", "dark omen", "a prophecy of an unhappy end" as well as "the awareness of ephemerality" (Pozsvai 149). The ambiguous division of space represented as right and left parts (as connoted by the titles of the novels) reflects, according to Pozsvai, the problems permanently inscribed in the territorial opposition between the East and the West, that is on what is indeterminate, isolated, closed (Pozsvai 149)⁹. The division brings to mind the real territorial borders and European spaces.

According to Kornélia Faragó, the author of *Térirányok, távolságok. Térdinamizmus a regényben* (*The Direction of Space, Distance: Space and its Dynamics in Novel*):

Territorialization, deterritorialization, reterritorialization – taking place on the basis of agreements, shifts and restorations – can be traced thanks to an examination of traces of these changes and also thanks to the historical and cultural dimension of space and the images of space consolidated in language (Faragó 2001:8).

The image presented by Bodor not only retains its internal contradictions inscribed into the cultural heterogeneity of Transylvania (the real equivalent of *Sinistra*), but also – on the path towards developing the spatial concept of nonexistent places – it also makes it possible to treat this remarkable province, which symbolizes the difficult political existence of Central Europe, as a matrix expressing the fundamental dilemmas of human existence. Bodor retains also the most important element of culture ascribed to this land – her concealed mystery. Not all of the characters struggle with the powers of primal nature, not all of them are "interned wanderers". Among these

⁹ Pozsvai refers to two other critical texts devoted to this issue: *A kiismerhetetlen remekmű* (Angyalosi 18) and *A hely, ahol lak(t)unk* (Alexy 82). The extraordinary nature of this space is emphasized by the absence of a cemetery, which symbolizes the desire to maintain continuity between ancestors and descendents. In *Sinistra* it is difficult to point to the existence of family ties; there are no generational dependencies, society functions temporarily, and any social guidelines are regulated by military orders.

characters appear ordinary observers, who came here, drawn by curiosity. It is they who ask: "What exactly is the mountain pass like?". The absence of any resolution makes it possible to treat *The Sinistra Zone* as a provocative text that elicits a discussion on the role and meaning of closed, Gulag-like, spaces. Bodor asks: can we leave the space that is marked and dominated by military forces? Is there anyone, who is a local in such a space, or should we instead speak of a ceaseless ethnic, linguistic transit of values and tradition? Bodor preserves the secret of this non-place; he does not suggest any unequivocal solutions, but proves that whoever once visits Sinistra is forever condemned to it.

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P a r t T h r e e

CZESŁAW MIŁOSZ
IN COMPARISONS

BETWEEN A COLONY AND AN EMPIRE. MIŁOSZ AND DOSTOYEVSKY

In the concluding sentences of *The Captive Mind*, published in Paris two years after his decision to remain there, Czesław Miłosz sets his poetic “gift of seeing simultaneously” against the optics of the Soviet Center (Miłosz 1981: 251). The unifying perspective of the Empire (*Union soviétique*), in which all differences are eliminated, collapses here with the acknowledgement of the incessant presence of particular nations, which had been consigned by History to dissolve in “the Russian sea”. Crimean Tatars, Ukrainians, Balts, Poles, Czechs – this is but the beginning of a long list of “endangered species”, whose side Miłosz takes, as if against the merciless logic of the Darwinian concept of natural selection. “Seeing simultaneously what is happening in Omaha and Prague, in the Baltic states and on the shores of the Arctic Ocean” (Miłosz 1981: 251), becomes here a synonym for the equal value of observed events. This ability allows the poet to restore the meaning and value of the “peripheries”, which had been condemned to oblivion, as well as to escape from the paralyzing charm of “historical necessity”.

The evil shadow of the Euro-Asian colossus ceaselessly follows Miłosz not only in what used to be the “capital of the world” on the Seine, but also in his later American refuge, where he was cordoned off from Soviet despotism by two oceans. Half a century later, he would write about the French that “our misfortunes did not weigh on

them”, “they didn’t want to understand anything and only complained that they were liberated by Americans, not by the most progressive nation of the world” (Miłosz 2011: 129, 130). What is more, their *désintéressement* extended also to the literature of occupied nations between Germany and Russia, which is perhaps why, during the whole decade which he spent in Western Europe, Miłosz did not have “even a single offer from any institution concerned with propagating knowledge” (Miłosz 1982: 200). When in America, Miłosz was met with a seemingly opposite tendency, as the Cold War was conducive to the development of Slavic Studies departments at universities, thought to be centers of Sovietology studies (cf. Cavanagh 2010: 6). Hired as a Polish literature instructor at the University of California, he quickly understood that there, just like in the Old Continent, the dominant perspective was Russocentric, which in practice entailed the marginalization of Central European literature. Based on years of observation, Miłosz claims that:

Students of Slavic languages and literature [...] are not [...] prepared to think about the area, whose events appear chaotic at best. They write their dissertations about Tyutchev or Goncharov and the presence of a tangible text reaffirms their conviction that only Russia is real (Miłosz 2010: 89).

In this way institutions called to “spread knowledge about the encroaching red disease” (Cavanagh 2010: 6), turned instead to “spreading praise” of Russian writers (Miłosz 2010: 90). Accompanying this kind of idolatry, which marginalizes “smaller literature” – and does so “against the clarion call issued on campuses for the equality of all cultures” – is, according to Miłosz, an element of “feedback” harkening back to a vision from the beginning of the nineteenth century of two world powers invested with a planetary calling, from America and Russia (Miłosz 2010: 90). In our search for the historical roots of this state of affairs, we cannot disregard the process of “orientalization” affecting Central Europe, which was initiated in the eighteenth century and carried out within the limits of the Enlightenment *episteme*. Enlightenment thinkers almost simultaneously constructed two “Orients”: far, African-Asian, unmasked by Edward W. Said in his famous *Orientalism* in 1978, and near, European, which still constitutes, to use Cavanagh’s phrase, “a white blemish on the map of contemporary theory” (cf. Cavanagh 2003: 60; Skórczewski 96–97).

In his defense of the identity and subjectivity of “small nations”, Miłosz took into account the “political” as well as the “rhetorical”

aspect of their loss of freedom. The University of Michigan in Ann Arbor organized a conference in January of 1986 devoted to Central European culture with the aim of counteracting the “Yalta program of American universities” (cf. Miłosz 2011: 416). At this conference, Miłosz denounced what he considered the “Easternization by force” of countries separated from the West by the “iron curtain”, a tendency manifested in, for example, these countries being doggedly described as Eastern European. “The hygienic reason to select the term Central Europe, he argued, is that it allows the search for the specific aspect of that culture and it protects us from erroneous analogies”, which are essentially based on reducing *ad Orientem*, or *ad Occidentem* (Miłosz 2011: 126–127). In the same presentation, Miłosz called the postwar order “an insult to the intellect”

In an era of anticolonialism, during the same time when the British and French Empires were collapsing, independent nations of half of Europe were subjected to external colonial despotism. The borders of the Empire and the garrisons of its army were incontrovertible; meanwhile, the mentality of the nations of masters appeared foreign to conquered populace, almost impossible to understand and barbaric. Russian self-admiration, or self-adoration, extends beyond the typical limits of haughtiness and bears the call of nineteenth-century messianism, which in that part of the world did not leave behind good memories (Miłosz 2011: 120).

Not only is the West unable to understand this mental difference but it is unable to even acknowledge it. This is why, when the West becomes interested in the Eastern European point of view, it looks for it in Russian literature. As a result, the voices of nations dependent on Russia are silenced and the odium of colonization is lifted. A Western reader often does not even realize that Russian literature is rarely “innocent”, having developed under the shadow of the Russian Empire. Ewa M. Thompson convincingly argued this point in her book *Imperial Knowledge. Russian Literature and Colonialism*. This shadow can sometime extend quite far. Thompson, much like Miłosz earlier, points to the “tendencies to idealize the successes of Russian culture, which have appeared in tsarist times and which are visible in the Soviet period” as the dominant influence on Russian studies in America (Thompson 2000b: VI). Consequently, “the standards, conventions and expectations of English-language scholarship on Russian literature do not accommodate, as Thompson states, the aggressive search for self-assertion”, present also (or perhaps most importantly) in the masterpieces of that literature (Thompson 2000a: 2). In those condi-

tions, the desired “decolonization” of Western perception of Central Europe would have to not only be based on giving voice to particular national literatures, co-creating the mosaic of that part of the continent, but also on displaying the imperial optics of the most preeminent Russian writers.

For Miłosz, as a scholar of Polish literature and culture, the opportunity to do so presented itself when he was invited by the University of Berkeley to conduct a course on Russian literature devoted to the works of Fyodor Dostoyevsky. “Had I been asked to conduct a course on Tolstoy, I would have said ‘no’”, admits Miłosz in a conversation with Aleksander Fiut, “but about Dostoyevsky I said: ok” (Fiut 125; cf. Miłosz 2010: 171). In deciding on what is now a traditional dilemma (“Tolstoy or Dostoyevsky”) in favor of Dostoyevsky Miłosz was influenced not only by the particular stance taken by the respective writers on the Russian nation, but also by how the imperial character of this nation manifests itself in their respective works. Lew Tolstoy belongs – as is shown in the analysis of *War and Peace* in *Imperial Knowledge* – to a category of writers who have introduced the imperial perspective into their works without any special intentions, almost unwittingly, as if succumbing into the force of inertia (cf. Thompson 2000a: 85–108). However, lecturing on Dostoyevsky allowed Miłosz the opportunity to expose the imperial character of Russian literature on the example of the writer, whose main, if not only, impulse for writing was his “affair with Russia”, understood as an apotheosis of her civilizational mission, a sacralization of her imperialistic passion (cf. Miłosz 2010: 139, 165).

This image of Dostoyevsky was not very well known in the West. It was associated mainly with his journalistic activity, the significance of which was downplayed in relation to his whole work. And this is precisely what incited Miłosz’s opposition. Miłosz contrasts the approach to Dostoyevsky which sees him “exclusively as a genius of psychological intuition” (Miłosz 2010: 83), which was a pervasive approach, especially in America, with his own “historical approach” (Miłosz 2010: 110), which moved towards “establishing the connection between Dostoyevsky’s journalism and his novels: in what mysterious way this ‘transmutes’ to great literature” (Miłosz 2010: 174)¹.

¹ Though he was quite critical of Western studies on Dostoyevsky, Miłosz saw an exception to this rule in Joseph Frank, a professor at Stanford University, the author of

According to Miłosz, it was important to “abandon the established opinion that genius resided in Dostoyevsky **despite** his reactionary views” and accept the fact that he was “a great writer, because he was something of a clairvoyant, and that he **owes** this gift to his reactionism” (Miłosz 2010: 149; emphasis mine). The primary task therefore was to break the tendency to separate Dostoyevsky the writer with Dostoyevsky the ideologue (Miłosz 2010: 102) by putting in parentheses “the philosophical and political orientation of Dostoyevsky, expressed in his journalism, journals and letters” (Miłosz 2010: 164). The aim of shifting the center of attention from the “psychological depth” of his characters to “reactionary views” of the author was in this case to regain the necessary balance (cf. Miłosz 2010: 91, 141–142), not yet another reduction of his work, this time to “the political dimension” (Miłosz 2010: 176).

What attracted Miłosz to Dostoyevsky was that he was a writer of literature that was not “excessively literary”, a characteristic which, according to Miłosz, “stems from the weight of the philosophy informing a given writer, that is the fervor with which he or she refers to final matters, which causes great tension between thought and work” (Miłosz 2010: 92).

I believe that the secret of Dostoyevsky is connected, paradoxically, with his political interests, which can be seen in his *A Writer's Diary*, with his great anxiety and fear concerning the future of Russia. [...] It is precisely from this rage, passion or anxiety that is the source of his inventiveness concerning this writing technique, which can be called a philosophical novel. (Miłosz 2010: 172)

The realism of this novel is based on the conviction that “history has a concealed metaphysical content” (Miłosz 2010: 158). “Dostoyevsky was mainly interested in history” said Miłosz in a conversation with Carl Proffer, but soon added that this was “a history of the Russian intelligentsia” (Miłosz 2010: 106). Miłosz viewed Dostoyevsky’s entire work as a “conscious consolidation and commentary on the changes in Russian thought” (Miłosz 2010: 84), which had a particular tendency to go astray. Miłosz cites Nikolai Berdyaev, who notices that Dostoyevsky’s main achievement was that he “perfectly exposed the **ontological** consequences of false ideas” (Miłosz 2010: 149). If then,

a multivolume study of Dostoyevsky, which, according to Miłosz, was an “unrivaled achievement of American Dostoyevsky scholarship” (Miłosz 2010: 86, 167).

according to Miłosz, Dostoyevsky's philosophy does not deserve to be ignored, it is precisely why it constitutes "a serious attempt at assessing the spiritual situation of man in the midst of diminishing religious faith and the advancements of the scientific worldview" (Miłosz 2010: 168), bringing an apt diagnosis of what he readily called "the erosion of religious imagination" (Miłosz 2010: 176). Despite the clear similarities in views shared by both writers towards the deepening spiritual disinheritance and the mental dependencies of the educated masses on communism, which was genocidal in its consequences, Miłosz did not surrender to the temptation to project onto Dostoyevsky his own views and interests, as has been done many times before and after him. Also, in practice he was successful in remaining true to his intentions of providing a multifaceted and comprehensive survey of Dostoyevsky's work, without excluding any of its aspects.

A good example of this objectivity is Miłosz's attitude towards Mikhail Bakhtin's hypothesis about the polyphonic character of Dostoyevsky's novels. Miłosz regarded Bakhtin with upmost respect and considered him as one of the representatives of "the old intelligentsia cultivating esoteric knowledge about his favorite writer" (Miłosz 2010: 162). In accordance with Aleksander Woźny's assessment, Bakhtin's work stems from the tradition of "Russian renaissance" from the turn of the century; this work is particularly tied to this movement, represented by Pavel Florensky and Sergei Bulgakov (Woźny 50–51). Bulgakov, along with Berdyaev, whom Miłosz often cited, belonged to a group of philosophers, who, in response to the revolution of 1905 and 1917, published two famous collections of articles, appropriately titled *Vekhi* ("about the Russian intelligentsia") and *Iz glubiny* ("about the Russian revolution"). According to Miłosz, "in the long history of reading Dostoyevsky in various countries, the highest place, in terms of understanding his intentions, should be accorded to the authors of these two books" (Miłosz 2010: 142), and its critique of intelligentsia "remains absolutely valid" even today (Miłosz 2010: 169). Miłosz also regards Bakhtin's work about the poetics of Dostoyevsky as "exceptional", fully worthy of the interest it has been received (Miłosz 2010: 162–163). This does not, however, mean that he refrains from expressing his skepticism with respect to the factual scope of polyphony in Dostoyevsky's novels. "His polyphony has its limits. Behind it is an ardent believer, a Russian millenarist and messianist. It is difficult to think of anything more monophonic than the scene with Poles in

The Brothers Karamazov, a flat satire at odds with the seriousness of the novel" (Miłosz 2010: 101).

Wacław Lednicki also analyzed this scene in terms of political propaganda in *Russia, Poland and the West* (New York 1954), a book Miłosz often cited. The scene in question refers to the moment when Dmitri Karamazov, in the company of Polish exiles, raises a toast to Russia, with Wróblewski and Musiałowicz agreeing to drink under one condition – that the toast be “to Russia within her borders before 1772” (Dostoyevsky 1997: 424). The propaganda tactic utilized here, as Lednicki notices, is based on having people, who had earlier been portrayed as insolent, arrogant idiots and scoundrels, vocally support a just protest, thereby laying the protest open to ridicule. According to Lednicki, the Polish episode in *Brothers Karamazov*, the center of which is the conflict about the borders of Poland and partitions, was to constitute an echo of the discussions that took place between Dostoyevsky and his Polish fellow prisoners during their internment at a penal colony in Omsk (Lednicki 284–285)². Miłosz rightly brings up this fragment of the novel as proof of the limits of Bakhtin’s concept in its application to a concrete novel. The correct subject of the rhetorical and imperial violence towards Poles introduced in *Brothers Karamazov*, is not thus any “liberated character”, entering “into relationships with other characters on the basis of their own logic, unforeseen by the author” (Miłosz 2010: 163), but the author himself, constructing Polish characters in such a way as to deprive them of any autonomy. Miłosz saw in the theory of polyphony, especially in its reception by American intellectualists, a useful tool for concealing the presence in the novel of that kind of double standards. He suspected in them, as he wrote, “the desire to separate the work of Dostoyevsky from his own journalism and thus to rescue his novels from any political suspicion” (Miłosz 2010: 163–164).

It is in this context that the significance of Miłosz’s comment to the well-known letter from Dostoyevsky to Natalia Fonvisin, written after he was released from the penal colony at the beginning of 1854, be-

² This hypothesis was later developed by Zbigniew Żakiewicz, who claimed that “Dostoyevsky not only wanted to mock Polish hopes of reclaiming independence for the land lost as a result of the 1772 partition, but also humiliate his Polish fellow prisoners”, Szymon Tokarzewski and Józef Bogusławski, as the two Poles from *The Brothers Karamazov* “appear to be caricatures of the inseparable couple of Polish political exiles”, known earlier from *The House of the Dead* (Żakiewicz 86).

comes most evident. Miłosz brings the image of Christ to the fore, an image that Dostoyevsky created for his own use, “putting together, as he confided to his addressee – a symbol of faith” (Miłosz 2010: 127)³. And it is this problem that takes us back to the key concept developed by Bakhtin, that is to the place where he recalls the following auto-commentary made by Dostoyevsky to the so-called legend of the Great Inquisitor in *The Brothers Karamazov*: “I have a moral model and an ideal, Christ. I ask: would he have burned heretics? – no. That means the burning of heretics is an immoral act...” (Bakhtin 97). According to Bakhtin, in the quoted passage “it is extremely characteristic of Dostoevsky that a question is put to the ideal image (how would Christ have acted?), that is, there is an internal dialogic orientation with regard to it, not a fusion with it but a following of it” (Bakhtin 98). The essence of polyphony in novels, according to Bakhtin, is the goal towards which all the multiple, parallel, and autonomous voices are directed.

The image of the ideal human being or the image of Christ represents for him [Dostoyevsky] the resolution of ideological quests. This image or this highest voice must crown the world of voices, must organize and subdue it. Precisely the image of a human being and his voice, **a voice not the author’s own**, was the ultimate artistic criterion for Dostoyevsky: not fidelity to his own convictions and not fidelity to convictions themselves taken abstractly, but precisely a fidelity to the authoritative image of a human being. (Bakhtin 97; emphasis mine)

And thus, the problem in maintaining the polyphonic aspect of his novel results, as opposed to Miłosz’s contention, not from the mere presence of “moralistic, Christian intentions of the author” (Miłosz 2010: 163), but from the extent to which these intentions are authentically Christian (“gift given freely”) and the extent to which they belong to the writer. It is therefore a matter of the veracity of the aforementioned “Christ’s image”. On the basis of Bakhtin’s theory, its verification does not generate any greater difficulties. It is enough to refer “the ultimate artistic criterion” to the aforementioned “scene with the Poles” and ask: would Christ have supported the imperial expansion of Russia? Dostoyevsky did not decide on a confrontation with such a formulated question among any of his Christ-like characters. However, the writer’s work, when treated as a coherent totality,

³ Miłosz cites here a larger fragment of Dostoyevsky letter, probably in his own translation.

which apart from his great novels also include “his journalism, journals and letters” (Miłosz 2010: 164), indicates ambiguously that the answer to this question would be affirmative. Miłosz arrives at an analogical conclusion on the basis of Dostoyevsky’s letter to Mme. N. D. Fonvisin. “If anyone could prove to me, Dostoyevsky wrote, that Christ is outside the truth, and if the truth **really** did exclude Christ, I should prefer to stay with Christ and not with truth” (qtd. in Miłosz 2010: 128). According to Miłosz, by contrasting Christ with truth, Dostoyevsky was embarking on a dangerous path leading straight to “a false Christ, that is someone who we imagine”, and thus “an idol in our likeness” in particular thus “to Christ brought to us ‘on the tips of bayonets’”, “an Imperial Christ” (Miłosz 2010: 103, 176–177).

For Dostoyevsky, Russia as a nation does not signify only a territory inhabited by Russians. Russia was to be responsible for the future of the world: whether it would become infected with atheist and socialist ideas arriving from the West, just as its intelligentsia had already been infected, or will the Tsardom and the devout Russian populace manage to rescue Russia, called forth to rescue mankind (Miłosz 2010: 142).

In what way did Dostoyevsky believe Russia was to rescue Europe? “Bringing her, as Miłosz reiterates, ‘a Russian Christ’ on the tips of bayonets” (Miłosz 2010: 155). Miłosz considered Dostoyevsky’s faith “in Christianity” as a “projection of his faith in Russia” (Miłosz 2010: 180).

This particular perspective exposed Miłosz to misunderstandings with his French and American friends, who directly accused him of nationalism (Miłosz 2002: 146). It should be noted that this type of accusation is not unusual coming from people with an imperialist mentality. As Thompson, following Leela Gandhi, notices:

The antinationalist phobias of first-world thinkers and their readiness to attribute chauvinism to the assertions of nationhood by stateless or empire-dominated nations are echoes of a Hegelian perception of a “lack” characterizing all but the strongest nationalisms of Europe. [...] The colonial and imperial nations characteristically *universalize* themselves and declare any insurgency against them (such as nationalism) illegitimate [...]. In doing so, they invoke their own modern societal structures, while suggesting that the insurgency is rural, backward, or uncivilized. Under such circumstances, rhetorical appropriation of a militarily weak enemy is an easy feat. [...] the “paranoid antipathy” toward nationalism is a form of retreat to the set of attitudes and ways of knowing that generated, among others, Orientalism. (Thompson 2000a: 11; cf. Gandhi 102–121).

The “postcolonial perspective” would also explain why Miłosz so often returns to “the question of Dostoevsky’s roots, which are supposedly to be found in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania”. According to Cavanagh, this trope provides Miłosz with a source of “another ‘perverted pleasure’ derived from returning the Russian author, against his will, to an idealized Lithuania”, as an answer “to the incessant Russocentric Dostoyevskian universe” (Cavanagh 2010: 16). We would, therefore, be dealing with a kind of “rhetorical revenge” exacted by Miłosz for having been born in Lithuania, i.e. in Russia, if one adopts Dostoyevsky’s perspective, as a “subject to the Russian Empire” (Miłosz 2010: 42; Miłosz 2002: 16). As Galina Starovoitova notes, “Russian national identity is closely related to territoriality; all conquered land is soon redesignated as Russia” (qtd. in Thompson 2000a: 8). This is fully in line with accounts of Dostoyevsky’s Polish companions from the penal colony in Omsk.

Dostoyevsky – one of them wrote – never said that Ukraine, Volhynia, Podolia, Lithuania and all of Poland are countries conquered by force; he always maintained that they have always belonged to Russia and that the hand of God’s justice had returned to the Tsar everything so that the populace would be enlightened by the paternal and divine rule of the Tsar. ‘Otherwise, as Dostoyevsky states, left to their own devices, these countries would fall into poverty, ignorance and barbarity’ (Bogusławski; cf. Tokarzewski 156).

Miłosz was always accompanied by the bitter awareness that Russia of Dostoyevsky “could have become what she was only by liquidating the Polish-Lithuanian *Respublica*” (Miłosz 2002: 129). At least one sentence in *The House of the Dead*, in which Dostoyevsky explains why Poles had it “much worse” in Siberia than Russians, speaks to this Russian writer’s credit. “They were far from their own country”, he wrote at the beginning of the chapter “Comrades” (Dostoevsky 1948: 249). What could he have had in mind, since all of the prisoners were far from their homes and relatives, regardless of whether they were brought to Omsk from Petersburg or Vilnius or Warsaw? Were they not inhabitants of “one Russia”, in which every corner, even the most distant and hostile, should feel like home? By giving Poles the right to feel nostalgia for their own country, did he not prove that he, if only for a moment, was privy to the perspective of a conquered nation?

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AN EMIGRANT ABOUT EMIGRANTS. FLAWLESS PORTRAITS OF OSCAR MIŁOSZ AND JOSIF BRODSKY

In 1985 a collection of academic essays and critical texts was published under the title *Poznawanie Miłosza (Understanding Miłosz)*. This volume, edited by Jerzy Kwiatkowski, still today evokes the impression of a “mass mobilization”, whose contributors, renowned researchers in their own right, decided to offer commentary on the writing of the poet émigré, who at that time was unknown to the general public. The aim of this volume was to explain to the readers, who were surprised at the worldwide success of Miłosz’s work, the reasons behind its greatness. That time in history required Miłosz’s work to be made “familiar” to the public, any programmatic incongruity needed to be eliminated, similarities underlined, and the whole of his work had to be annexed to the existing order and embedded in the traditional context.

Miłosz, who was then an almost mythical figure, existing far away, beyond an impassable political border, seemed to evoke generally positive reactions ranging from worship to partial approval. Many of the critical writings from that time paved the way for the future reception of his work. Jan Błoński explains the specificity of his poetry: “What are these moments of epiphany and clarity? Nothing else than moments of sensual experience so intense that they lead to the subject melting with the object” (Błoński 210). Long before the

appearance of the complete volumes of Miłosz's later poetry, Błoński presented following diagnosis:

Poetic egotism (which does not seem to have disappeared, and thank God, because poetry needs unconventionality and loftiness) becomes a part of the community's spirit. That is how a folksong turns into a symphony. The later work of Miłosz is an enormous endeavor to socialize and sacralize his personal experience. "Salvation", which he spoke of so often is not only a saving oneself for oneself, but becomes the saving of others and for others (Błoński 223)

Błoński indicated that Miłosz's emigration poetry was often divided between recording personal epiphanies and the effort he consciously undertook to preserve values for the community.

Working on behalf of the community, though far from the everyday matters of collective life, could have been inscribed in the well-established model of an émigré poet offering insight to his countrymen. The main strategy of a writer aiming, on a certain level, to develop a clear poetic diction, to apply one's own, singular lyrical epiphanies, which were axiologically charged and directed towards a collective, turned out to be an ambivalent strategy in the changed conditions following 1989. Negative emotions began to accompany the constant, or even growing, feelings of acceptance and recognition: aversion, lack of understanding, denial of rights – treated now as usurpation – to any form of teaching, considered unnecessary moralizing or devoid of community legitimacy teaching of personal convictions.

Meanwhile, the choice of translations, promotional and analytical, was also didactically influenced. The content of poetic anthologies and the choice of topics for essays and critical texts were subjected to the consciously undertaken task of educating the community, regardless of whether the addressee of these specific works was Polish community, European community or mankind in general. This characteristic feature of the poet's work, especially visible during the last 25 years of his life, tended to be understood as him undertaking a self-imposed "private responsibility", though its real influence, even on the shape of the literary scene in his own country, turned out to be illusory. With the kind of passion some give themselves over to charity work, he devoted himself to the vocation of teaching, explaining and interpreting.

Agata Stankowska, examining the unity of Miłosz's poetry with his manifestoes – most often directed against variously defined "incomprehensible poetry" – claims that Miłosz

never concealed that he wanted to influence the development of Polish poetry, critique it as well as develop its present and future shape [...] Writing about an avalanche that alters its direction in relation to the rocks that are in its way, Miłosz believed that even single, but conscious actions can alter the course of even the strongest power structures as well as of the presumably immovable elements of modern poetics (Stankowska 55).

The numerous auto-portraits Miłosz created during his whole life, along with their contextual background assembled out of portraits of writers from other periods and other nations, had a similar, didactically-charged character, emerging from a personal sense of responsibility to the community. "Our Community" from *Roadside Dog* presents an honest diagnosis of the condition of artists who are impelled by resentment and mutual animosities, and who refuse to even consider the fact that the fame they so desire is nothing more than abstract, ephemeral, and transient, whereas the real issue has to do the "image of oneself" (Miłosz 1997: 74).

Miłosz had tempestuous relationships with many other writers during his long life; these relationships were marked by different levels of emotion and were variously understood and interpreted by Miłosz at different stages of his life. This is why the functional aspect of his portraits is so interesting; these portraits were from the start drawn clearly and unapologetically. It would seem that they would have aided in the textual realization of this "image of oneself" or even constituted its integral part. As a rule, this function was fulfilled by the recurrent images of his relative, Oscar Miłosz, three decades his senior, who he had met later in life and lost prematurely, as well as of Joseph Brodsky, three decades his junior, who he outlived by a few years.

Miłosz was conscious of his tendency to teach through literary portraits. In *Roadside Dog* we can find the following diagnosis and declaration: "if I were to begin anew every one of my poems, it would be a biography or a portrait of a specific person, and more specifically, a lament on their fate" (Miłosz 1997: 163). Declaring compassion for the subjects of his portraits might have indicated not only the ability to bestow compassion on members of the human community, but also a belatedly gained ability to forgive himself. By creating these positive, somewhat parallel, portraits, Miłosz was facilitating the ceaseless process of creating his own self-image, and by their very existence, cemented in one textual form, these portraits sometimes assumed the role of a convenient argument.

The way in which Miłosz interpreted the course of “exemplary” biographies could be seen as a directive on how to read his own work. In his study of Miłosz’s biography – seen as an “archetype of a poet’s biography”, which quite playfully engages with Mickiewicz’s biography – Marek Zaleski distinguishes its constitutive characteristics:

He rebelled against the Lechite community and sacrificed himself to the community [...] the imperative to incessantly create auto-representations is intriguing: it comes from a sense of responsibility not only for oneself, but also for the tribunal of the community. Yes, there was in this the passion of self-awareness. But there was also the strong obligation to create one’s portrait imposed by the need to make good on this social contract (Zaleski 410)

The difficult, and never simple, relationships Miłosz had with “the Lechite community” could fulfill themselves only in the constantly undertaken task of teaching. The biography constitutes the central project of so understood calling.

Being his own director was accompanied by portraying Oscar Miłosz as an artist whose work was on equal footing with Einstein’s discoveries, something which was sometimes regarded as importunate, though always indisputably unambiguous. Presenting his cousin’s work with such sincere admiration and respect was from the very beginning part and parcel of consciously creating a role model. The status of an emigrant constantly requires the effort of reconstructing one’s own identity. As an Easterner forced to define himself in relation to Western reality, Czesław Miłosz found in the biography of the “French poet from Lithuania” a model for self-affirmation and real spiritual autonomy. Andrzej Franaszek claimed:

Oscar Miłosz’s stance of renouncing the struggle for literary laurels brought to mind the fervor of a prophet or an evangelical student, who relinquishes everything to follow the word of God. The author of *Three Winters*, who achieved in art incomparably more success, would have been incapable of such extremes (Franaszek 219).

What became the real inspiration for Miłosz was the idea of an uncompromising search for other paths of artistic development and identity formation, which would not be dictated by current fashions or “edicts of the era”.

What also became more important was being able to combine the painful understanding of the disintegrating world with the seemingly

irreconcilable hope of its future renewal. Above all, the important ideal remained the anachronic, though authentic, zeal of bearing witness: "Oscar Miłosz's faith in the future rebirth of humanity, as well as the divine unity of time, spirit and matter will be one source of hope, hidden in the core of his student's poems, hope which will prevent him from succumbing to despair" (Franaszek 225). A few years after the death of his cousin, Miłosz created his apologetic portrait in *The Land of Ulro*, presenting his cousin as one of the most important spiritual guides. Miłosz also knew that the shared surname and his desire to find a "fatherly" authority figure would not be enough to propel Oscar Miłosz to the status of an authority figure. What was of more significance was the fact that Oscar Miłosz's work moved the young, sensitive poet, as it dealt with the perennial question of how to say "yes" to our existence on earth (Miłosz 1982: 220). What attracted Czesław Miłosz to the work of his relative, apart from Oscar Miłosz's extreme individualism and his manifested unconventionality, apart from his inviolable refusal to succumb to fashion (not only in literature), was his ability to put forward the idea of the difficult acceptance of existing in our reality.

The similarity of the existential situation, and above all, the necessity to find one's own place in a foreign world, forced both artists to take advantage of, and consciously conduct a game with the traditional forms of knowledge that tie the existence of an emigrant to the fate of an abandoned community (coupled with the simultaneous search for a way to finally transgress it). Miłosz by the end of his life emphasized with full certainty that "We are born in a concrete point of the Earth and we have to remain faithful to this point, restrained in our following of foreign fashions" (Miłosz 2004: 88). However, patriotism had to take on the form of being aware of one's own personal borders, fidelity not just towards one's nation, but to one's culture built on individually formed principles. Attachment to one's place of birth need not mean having to enclose oneself in a confined space – only emotions thus modified could allow an emigrant to actively create his or her emigrational identity.

Oscar Miłosz, a naturalized Frenchman, author of adaptations of Lithuanian folktales and folksongs, underlined that he is Lithuanian and saw his choice of nationality as an unalienable right of every person. Czesław Miłosz saw it as an epitome of resisting one's fate, a model of spiritual autonomy:

The truth is that he was a Lithuanian and a Frenchman by choice. His fate was wandering and searching for his own place all his life in the geographical as well as metaphysical sense. As an aristocrat – and he believed that the memories of his ancestors are preserved in his blood – he wanted to remain faithful to his dual genealogy – aristocratic and Jewish. (Miłosz 2007: 77)

In the strategy deployed to find one's own model of existence outside the borders drawn by ethnic identity we can distinguish the principle of creatively using elements of stereotyped models of an emigrant's life with the directives of constructing a private biography which would transcend the confines of that model, which is to say, a search for "a more capacious form" also in the long process of doggedly striving to create a clear image of one's own identity.

Already in *Native Realm*, Miłosz had confidently advanced the claim that the relationship of Eastern Europeans to the "cultural centers" is based on complexes, timidity and subservience, which is why "they copy instead of resist, they are reflections instead of being themselves" (Miłosz 2001: 209). The search of one's own place abroad is, therefore, a search for space that is somewhat exterritorial – regardless of whether it is an embassy or university – a space in which it would be possible to, whilst cultivating the tender memory of one's first homeland, construct the identity of a wanderer, Odysseus, whose fate will not return him to his homeland, or Aeneas, whose each new home will be nothing more than temporary shelter. The only protection against despair might be to transform one's status of an exile or a pilgrim to a consciously assumed role of a missionary, whose existential purpose would be to teach, bear witness, explain, and especially to build a hierarchical order.

Miłosz and Brodsky are not the only authors in whose work one can find tender recollections about their place of birth, though rarely at the beginning of their emigrational road: Ithaca, which they must abandon if they are to embark on their journey of self-awareness. A similar tone can be found in Oscar Miłosz's poem, *Insomnia*, in which a wanderer's grievance can be heard, a wanderer who was disappointed in his youth by "fabulous tales, full of old-world islands" (Miłosz 2007: 38–39). In order to leave Ithaca, aside from nurturing her idealized image, it was necessary to, above all, muster the effort to successfully tame the space of new experiences. Life as an emigrant during the second half of the twentieth century, following the civilizational catastrophe of the war and the attendant global cultural chan-

ges, entailed having to constantly uproot oneself from existence and a total, overwhelming homelessness in a foreign world.

All the wandering, drifting, and searching was in Miłosz's case connected to the feeling of guilt caused by remaining abroad – it is an existence of limbo between the obvious desire for stability of whatever kind and a faith in the cognitive value of facing never-ending obstacles, which are everyday occurrences for a “man on the move”. Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz, a particularly critical reviewer of *Native Realm*, wrote in his journal on October 21, 1960 the following:

And for him it was the tedious accumulation of evidence that he is not cut out for life in Poland. But he was also not cut out for life in America, for life in general. He is an albatross. [...] Strange is the fate of man, eternal anxiety of self-worship. There is something of a naïve, Eastern faith in the possibility of arriving at an answer to “all the questions” (Iwaszkiewicz 422).

Aleksander Fiut was right when he wrote that Miłosz's “taking root in America” was most likely a symbolic taming of space, in which it would be possible to reconcile oneself with the status of exile, and even arrive at the bitter conviction that exile is everyone's destiny (Fiut 255).

On the other hand, Bożena Karwowska, in her examination of the connection between the literary expression of Miłosz's self-awareness as an exile and the cultural changes and birth of postcolonial discourse, pointed to the consequences of this chosen path and to the fact that already in the 1980s:

Miłosz as well as Brodsky (for similar reasons, as both did not limit themselves to “the narrow horizons of the archipelago of exile”) refused to be classified as an emigrant group of their countrymen; they became regarded as members of an international community, who have been defined by critics as “poets-in-exile” or “nationless writers” (Karwowska 86).

This change was made possible under the circumstances of yet another civilizational watershed, the fall of the ossified postwar order – the term “nationless” did not alter the degree of attachment to one's abandoned country, but indicated merely the change in the judgment of the degree to which its lack could determine the discourse of exile.

From the chosen perspective of current cultural changes, Miłosz's voice could have been seen not only as a voice of an émigré Polish poet or an American poet, but an artist offering a diagnosis of a universal dimension. Karwowska argues that “the Americanness

of Miłosz was based on his ability to merge with the most important critical discourses of Anglophone world – thereby changing his approach to exile as well as his critical reflection of it” (Karwowska 93–94). Miłosz’s later auto-creational activities could have inspired not only explorations of the poet-exile *topos* but also traditional analyses of the link between the status of an emigrant and his artistic output, which were scientifically sound considerations already developing in other countries.

If autonomously defining oneself and one’s place in the world is to be a conscious and constantly renewed goal, then fortitude is in such a situation a necessary condition. Miłosz wrote about Brodsky the following:

“I permitted myself everything expect complaints” – this saying of Brodsky’s ought to be pondered by every young person who despairs and is thinking about suicide. [...] expelled from Russia – he decided to act as if nothing had changed; he equated the Nobel Prize with the capricious turns of fate he had experience previously. The wise men of antiquity recommended such behavior, but there are not many people who can behave like that in practice. (Miłosz 1998: 288)

Maintaining a distance to oneself and to others serves to establish the boundaries of one’s own autonomy. This is how Irena Grudzińska-Gross saw the specificity of auto-presentation of emigrants at the junction of public and private sphere. She created a double portrait entitled *Miłosz i Brodski. Pole Magnetyczne* (*Miłosz and Brodsky. Magnetic Poles*). Writing about the darker sides of both artists’ personalities, she understood them also as characteristics which were in a way positive, as they aided in the struggle to maintain individuality.

Maybe the perspicuity of the publicly revealed flaws, along with the haughtiness which was ascribed to them (and to Oscar Miłosz), was meant to validate the self-aggrandising measures, but above all to highlight what is central in constructing the images of “rebels” for public use, who constantly fight for maintaining the “hierarchy” of collapsing orders. Only when committing the sin of haughtiness could one attempt to change the course of events. It would seem then that, in the case of Miłosz and Brodsky, the most important shared conviction that they held had to do with the fundamental importance of going against the erosion of civilization and defending values and the idea that artistic involvement in modern society is a necessity.

Writing is not so much a kind of “private obligation”, nor is it even an overpowering inner imperative – though discernable in the artistic work of Oscar Miłosz – as it is the duty of carrying on the work of poetically explaining human existence and the world we inhabit. Miłosz wrote:

Joseph Brodsky went as far as to deny that we are writing for posterity. According to him, we write for the approval of the shadows of poets who came before us. Upon consideration, this sentence presents practical advice for proud avant-garde artists who are certain that they’re doing something new (Miłosz 2004: 114)

It is precisely this mission of cultivating the old tradition of creatively and ingeniously reacting to the condition of the world that establishes the scope of the efforts made to reinterpret the state of contemporary culture. This mission was also connected to the fact that all kinds of teaching assumed the form of unambiguous observations and apodictic injunctions.

Oscar Miłosz, analyzing the poetry after Goethe and Lamartine in his essay “A Few Words on Poetry”, which Czesław Miłosz included many years later in his suggestively titled *Private Obligations*, claimed without a shadow of a doubt that poetry under the influence of German romantics of the second order – Edgar Allan Poe, Baudelaire and Mallarmé – became impoverished and narrower, which in effect “directed it towards the subconscious, towards experiments, which, although certainly interesting, sometimes even praiseworthy, were nonetheless marked by purely aesthetic interests, almost always singular in nature” (Miłosz 1990: 32). The need, according to Miłosz, is for a genius artist, as the chasm between poetry and mankind will not be filled, unless a modern Homer, Shakespeare or Dante comes along: a poet who will transcend the limits of the small “cramped” self, in order to determine the secrets of the community. The responsibility of the artist is to strive for such an ideal, even if it means sacrificing contemporary acclaim.

Similarly, Brodsky devoted his attention to only a few artists, who he considered undeniably outstanding. This group included the likes of Dante, Cavafy, Auden, Mandelstam, Tsvetaeva, Akhmatova; they were the writers Brodsky would write about, thereby developing his own hierarchy for everyone to adopt. Brodsky argues also that:

Yet it’s fine to be absurd – for yourself, and in your own art, etc., etc. – but when somebody next door, who while not being an artist gets it very badly in his

neck because for that absurdity of the century, you can't really press your artistic point. (Miłosz 2007: 161)

Rejecting helplessness and the passive acceptance of the absurdity of existence, with all the attendant projects connected with the preservation of values, is perhaps to be the sources of the necessity to constantly find and rescue oneself, in the space of civilizational disintegration.

Both Oscar and Czesław Miłosz as well as Brodsky cross paths on "the wasteland", which – much like for Eliot – does not end with a just a description of it, but with the attempt to actively resist its horror, with the search for hope, the development of a vision of salvation. Czesław Miłosz, as the author of "Thoughts on T. S. Eliot", revealed the similarities between the poetic landscapes of London in *Wasteland* and Paris in Oscar Miłosz's *Symphonies*, pointing to their kinship as "poets of insatiability" (Miłosz 1990: 125). He was also often amazed that Eliot, a master for several generations of American and English poets, was never honored with a poem after his death (Miłosz 2007: 62). The conclusion was always the same: conquering the bitter awareness of a short existence on a wasteland tainted by the absurdity of existence can only take place if one accepts that there exists a realm of values immune to derangement and then takes on the task of defending its hierarchical existence.

Near the end of the 1980s, Miłosz in a conversation with Brodsky said: "Before the war, I experienced the influence of Oskar Miłosz who taught me lofty resistance towards decadence" (Miłosz 1998: 126). He noticed in Brodsky's biography and work a similar "lofty resistance" against ubiquitous disintegration:

Here was a man who by his oeuvre and by his life reminded us, against what today is so often proclaimed and written, that hierarchy exists. That hierarchy cannot be contrived by syllogisms and established in a discourse. Rather, by living and writing, we affirm it every day anew. It has something to do with the elementary division in to beauty and ugliness, truth and falsity [...] hierarchy means respect for that which is elevated and unconcern, rather than scorn, for what is base. (Miłosz 1998: 278)

The idea of "hierarchy" as faith, however difficult, in the possibility of reconstructing the order of existence (if only in poetry), made it possible to endure a mundane, onerous existence. Remembering the sources of his inspiration and the sense of community shared with

fellow travelers on this difficult road allowed Miłosz to reaffirm his loyalty towards an obligation he once assumed: the defense of poetry against desacralization, which would ultimately lead it to its marginalization.

In the above-mentioned conversation/interview, which Brodsky conducted with Miłosz, Miłosz once again referred to the work of Oscar Miłosz, although he did so this time with colloquial ease, unlike the broad, reverent considerations found in *The Land of Ulro*. Still, the most important lesson to be taken from his relative's work was the idea of being open to the renewal of the Earth. He repeated with conviction that "the theory of relativity opened the doors to a new era, an era of harmony between science, religion and art". The Newtonian world, in a way hostile to the imagination, art and religion had to give way to ambiguity, because for modern physics, like once for Oscar Miłosz, "everything is oneness of movement, matter, time and space" (Miłosz 2007: 158). This conversation allowed Miłosz and Brodsky to reconcile and to bring their respective artistic, critical and even readerly stances closer together. Also, both artists without hesitation and doubt indicated who their successor would be – like them, a poet, translator, emigrant, Stanisław Barańczak (Miłosz 2007: 166).

In the end, it is important to mention the culmination of the "private obligation" to cultivate the memory of the ideals rooted in the project of constructing one's own identity. The poem "A Journeyman" from the volume *The Second Space* surprises with an Eliotean, provocatively archaic form, one that is doubled, incorporating lyrical verse and prose footnotes, reiterating and consolidating earlier stories into an undisputed homage. The poetic biography of Oscar, the "master", once again appears to be in fact the autobiography of "a journeyman", a record of his spiritual journey, and a reminder of important events and meetings. Venice, always present in the poet's life like a musical motif, turned out to be an immeasurably important place – from his first visit before the war to his last visit for Joseph Brodsky's funeral (Miłosz 2002: 96).

A portrait seamlessly changes into an self-portrait and the farewell to the master becomes a farewell to the world. At the end of "A Journeyman" we once again see Miłosz's unambiguous and distinct life credo, which is to take action within the language of one's own poetry and "prevent the sense of hierarchy from getting lost in this language" (Miłosz 2002: 111). However, it is also possible to find

in this poem a sense of futility in regards to any human endeavor and doubt not so much in the value of taking action in life as in its purpose and in the permanence of the results. This is most visible near the end of the poem, when "Venice set sail like a great ship of death" (Miłosz 2002: 98). Venice becomes for Miłosz, who is at the end of his life, a space ready to accept the unborn, where the old poets will be nothing more than enigmatic legends.

Unintelligible, a fanciful story about a writer and his work – this is perhaps how posterity will view Czesław Miłosz. Zaleski argues that "Miłosz's biography overwrites Mickiewicz's biography and is a text given to us to read by the author himself" (Zaleski 412). It is a text that yields multiple interpretations, the proof of which are the numerous critical texts appearing after Miłosz's death. He can be read against the author's intentions, deconstructed or invalidated by various ideological positions. What is indisputable, however, is the existence of these texts, which will remain a clear point of reference for every one of his successors, who dares to reach for the title of national prophet. Yet, there is doubt whether in today's antagonistic cultural projects there is room for such a gesture to repeat itself.

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WAT – RUSSIA – MIŁOSZ

I will begin with an attempt to clarify the subject at the heart of the dialogue between Wat and Miłosz – Russia. Writing about Russia, Nikolai Berdyaev emphasizes that the history of Russia is characterized by discontinuity and five distinct epochs can be distinguished. These are: Kievan Rus, the Rus from the age of Tatar rule, Muscovite Russia, the Russia of Peter I and Soviet Russia. He adds that it is also possible that there will be a new Russia (Berdyaev 1947).

Aleksander Wat's thoughts on the subject concentrate on Soviet Russia, which dominated his whole work and almost his whole adult life. History of literature presents Wat first as a futuristic poet, a leftist intellectual, an editor of the communist *The Literary Monthly*, and a frequent guest of banquets held by the USSR embassy in Warsaw; then, he is presented as a Soviet prisoner and exile, and finally as a man suffering from chronic pain, who saw his suffering as a punishment for having been actively involved in communism before the war (Wat 2003).

However, Miłosz, who treats Russia as an inextricable and obsessive part of every Pole's consciousness (Miłosz 1990: 134), accepted a much wider perspective. For him Soviet Russia is also important, not only because of the hope he saw in her when he was young, but also because of the life decisions he and those he was close to had to make. He writes about this in *Captive Mind* (Miłosz 1953). An important person, around whom the "Russian problem" revolves, is Fyodor Dostoyevsky, a writer who was also of interest to Wat. Both writers

approach Dostoyevsky not only as essayists. Wat translated *The Brothers Karamazov*, a book he often refers to in his own work, as well as to *Demons*. Miłosz, who does not like the “Western tendency to prepare Dostoyevsky in a Freudian sauce” (Miłosz 1978: 54), compiled university courses devoted to Dostoyevsky in an attempt to portray him not as a writer of psychological depth but as a writer who developed in a specific historical era, who had a sense of his own mission in life, as well as Russia’s mission in Europe. It is precisely the validity of this mission that will become the focal point of Miłosz’s dispute with Dostoyevsky.

What Dostoyevsky, Wat and Miłosz all share are experiences that compel them to stand not so much on the same side as on the side that is other than that of the Western world. Wat never forgot the mood of the decadence he experienced as he was lingering about the Berlin clubs near the end of the 1920s with Stefan Napierski (Mark Eiger) (Wat 2003). That image of Berlin convinced him that “it will come to fruition, if not today, then tomorrow or the day after: communism is at the door (Wat 2003).

From his stay in Paris in the 1930s, Miłosz brought back recollections of multilingual masses of workers wandering about in search of work” (Miłosz 1997: 191). Dostoyevsky viewed the Western world in even darker outlook. In his notes from journeys around Europe which he went on in 1862 he noted the images of crowds convening on the streets and public squares of London: “half a million workers, men and women, with their children [...] flocking to certain parts of the town, and all through the night, till five o’clock in the morning, they are taking part in a bacchanalian revel, eating and drinking like beasts, to last, one would think, the whole week” (Dostoyevsky 165). He was completely appalled by the image of streets crowded with prostitutes and paupers. Among them one could see teenage prostitutes and “mothers bringing their underage daughters for financial gain” (Dostoyevsky 166-167).

Despite similar observations, the three writers formulate different solutions. Wat believed that the only rescue for Europe plagued by decadence and inequality can only be a revolution paving the way to communism – that is what one gathers reading his work published in 1929-1931 in *The Literary Monthly* of which he was, as he admits, a “dictatorial” editor (Wat 2003). Dostoyevsky presented Orthodox Russia as a remedy to unemployment and mass poverty. Miłosz was

convinced that such social inequality should be leveled. In his novel, *The Seizure of Power* (1953), he presents History as a process which no one and nothing can stop. Włodzimierz Bolecki, explaining this as a Marxist worldview, emphasizes: “Historical events are from this perspective determined much like the rhythm of the changing seasons, daybreak and nightfall or the evolution of species. This is in relation, of course, to the so-called historical necessity” (Bolecki 61). Tomasz Burek refers to the “Hegelian bite” in regard to this (Burek).

As a young law student, Miłosz would regularly read the communist *The Literary Monthly*, though he had nothing in common with Marxism, and especially with communism. After some time, in *Man Amongst Scorpions*, he downplays the attention he devoted to the Soviet version of communism in his youth, explaining that his interest in this subject matter was a result of his reading of Stanisław Brzozowski’s social thought (Miłosz 2000: 5-6).

A certain kind of symbolism can be noticed in Miłosz’s and Wat’s relationship, something both writers sometimes called attention to. Born in 1900, Wat is a representative of the generation directly preceding Miłosz’s. Edited in 1929-1931, *The Literary Monthly* was read by the young student at the Vilnius University. He was particularly fond of the articles describing the difficult conditions of the Polish proletariat. Publication of *Monthly* ceased in 1931, the same year when the first edition of *Żagary* appeared, a magazine with which Miłosz was affiliated. In 1951 both writers together celebrate New Year’s Eve at Jan Parandowski. Miłosz in *A Year of the Hunter* recalls his trepidation at finding himself in the company of the Parandowskis and the Wats (Miłosz 1994). That is the last New Year’s Eve celebration Miłosz spent in his country before emigrating and one of the last that Wat survived free of the disease which later was to be the cause of his suicide. The year 1951 is also traditionally seen as a kind of caesura, after which both writers stopped publishing their work in their country (Pietrych 12). And, last but not least, *My Century*, which Miłosz listened to and recorded in Berkeley, is the first and last collaboration of both writers. In his earlier drafts for *Native Realm*, he emphasized that he comes from a family that put down roots in Lithuania. In the preface to *My Century* he builds a bridge between his “rootedness” in the world and the “rootedness” of Wat. That is why he recalls his ancestors so broadly and with such detail: rabbis, medieval scholars, famous kabbalists, and also participants of the January Uprising, clerics

from Vienna (Miłosz 1981). It is difficult not to notice that the type and scope of this information is far greater than common practice would indicate.

This excess only emphasizes a fact that is impossible to reduce: Aleksander Wat was Jewish. This has a huge significance in understanding the type of hope that Wat and other Polish Jewish communists saw in Russia (Shore), and also allows us to assess the extent of the disappointment they experienced.

Miłosz admits that when he was young, he knew very little about Jews, their culture, at least as far as the books published in Vilnius by Jewish authors are concerned. Yet he was able to decisively oppose the anti-Semitic sentiment (Miłosz 1994).

We could assume that the young Miłosz knew about the hope that many Jews cultivated for a political system whose essence was purported to be equality and justice for all people, regardless of their ethnic background or religion, that is, a political system where pogroms, ghetto benches, *numerus clausus*, *numerus nullus*, were to be unthinkable; just as unthinkable as Auschwitz was from the perspective of the 1930s.

To learn about Wat's attitude to Russia, we can read Leszek Kołakowski's essay entitled "Bóg czyli względność miłosierdzia", in which he addresses the question: is God good? The answer depends, claims Kołakowski, on who is asking the question. Is it Moses and his people, who were led out Egypt, or, for example, is it the pharaoh and his subjects, who lost everything that was firstborn, including their own children (Kołakowski 127). Simply put, the question about Wat's Russia is dependent on the position in which he finds himself at that moment. And the answer to that question could be imposed either by the deep faith in the justness of everything that is happening in Russia and because of Russia or by the feeling of deep injustice. For example: in the eleventh issue (1930) of *The Literary Monthly* there appeared a laudatory article about the cultural life in the USSR, detailing the immense popularity of literature and journalism among the so-called general population. This observation was illustrated by the following: "millions of reports sent to central, district, and factory newspapers [...] contributed to exposing many abuses and injustices" (Z.S. 499). In a lecture delivered in Oxford in 1962, Wat returns to the idea of mass literature, but describes it this time in a completely different perspective. He writes:

Weeks of recruitment are organized to attract workers to the ranks of the literati. During the International Congress in Kharkiv (1930) there is something to be proud of [...]: in three weeks one thousand workers were recruited. The majority of them are regional press correspondents, which is to say a variant of the secret police¹.

Incidentally, writers in the USSR and in the Polish People's Republic were particularly adored. That being a postwar "engineer of souls" could yield many advantages is something Miłosz learned from a letter he received from Jerzy Andrzejewski, who was offered a villa by the government, a maid paid by the government along with a so-called "governess" for the children (Miłosz 2007: 60). Miłosz could not afford any of these luxuries following the war during his stay in America. He maintained contact with many friends from Poland and Europe. In these letters Miłosz addressed problems which stemmed from the type of relationship and the degree of intimacy connecting him to his addressees and often also touched on literature and issues related to publishing his work in Polish magazines. Miłosz rarely addressed the problems connected with the current political system in Poland and Russia, though his work, which would soon thereafter appear in Paris (*Captive Mind, The Seizure of Power, Native Realm*), provided ample evidence that he had much to say on that particular subject. For example, in a letter to Iwaszkiewicz from 1947, Miłosz sarcastically writes about the intellectual tendencies present in *Kuźnica*:

I read [...] *Kuźnica*. Żółkiewski's articles are widely known abroad and have certainly increased the citizen count in the States, France and the British dominion, as people usually choose the lesser evil, though here they're not condemned to the authority of this outstanding journalist. (Miłosz 2007: 167)

Of interest is his correspondence with Irena and Tadeusz Kroński, who were then residing in Paris and whom Miłosz later portrayed in an essay entitled "Tiger" (Miłosz 1990). The Krońskis did not hold back with their opinions. When they wrote to Miłosz that Polish intellectual life is governed by "hetman" – they were in fact referring to

¹ This lecture served as the basis for the essay titled "A Few Comments on the Relation between Literature and Soviet Reality" ("Kilka uwag o związkach między literaturą a rzeczywistością sowiecką" [A few comments about the relation between and Soviet reality]) published in the volume *Świat na haku i pod kluczem*. Essays. Ed. K. Rutkowski. Warszawa, 1991. The cited fragment can be found on p. 160.

Stefan Żółkiewski; when they claimed that the Polish press is being ordered around by “kitties” (pl. “kotki”) – they had Jan Kott in mind; when they were complaining about the new oversight introduced in the Parisian embassy by Atramenta vel Janczar (Miłosz 2007, 267) – they had Jerzy Putrament in mind; when they wrote that Jewrejsz was on his way to Paris – they had Jerzy Borejsza in mind (Miłosz 2007: 344). They summed up the prevailing mood in the Polish embassy in the following words: “militant and ultranationalistic – Russians with eagles pinned to their yarmulkes” (Miłosz 2007: 349).

This verbal prodding by the Krońskis was meant to be a form of social criticism, not a discussion about worldviews. It is, however, difficult to ignore what today we would call politically incorrect jokes. Perhaps because the Kroński family was Jewish, they wanted to use such jokes to distance themselves from the activities of the Polish embassy in France or to underline their impression of the transient and carnivalesque mood of Paris. Though it is difficult to explain the sarcasm in these comments, it is impossible not to notice the inherent complex resulting from the combination of concepts connected with the Jewish community, communism, and Soviet Russia. It included the stereotypes of “communist-Jew”, or finally “Ubek-Jew”² (cf. Tazbir) as well as the hope many Jews invested in Soviet Russia and the revolution. The reasons why Soviet Russia, along with the vision of “a better new world” it offered, was attractive to Polish Jews is discussed by Joanna Nalewajko-Kulikow (Nalewajko-Kulikow 67-76). Alain Besançon explains the reason for this association, indicating that many Jews embraced communism, as it allowed them to freely exist in the modern world without the burden of strict religious limitations of the Torah. At the same time, they would be able to retain their religious affiliation as a matter of heritage rather than religious observance, as communism was thought to strive for the same goal as Judaism, i.e. peace and justice, further drawing a parallel between the Jews and the proletariat through a common experience of exploitation. (Besançon 2007). Julian Strykowski’s claim that “a communist Jew ceases to be a Jew” could be paraphrased in the following manner: a Jew never becomes a “real” communist, because he will always remain a Jew (Strykowski, Szewc 48). In 1923 Nikolai Berdyaev turned his attention to this issue arguing that Marx shifts the idea of Messianism, particular to the Jewish nation chosen by God, to the

² Trans note: “Ubek” refers to officers of the Secret Political Police functioning in Poland during Stalinist era.

idea of social class, and especially to the proletariat. Similarly, as the chosen nation was Israel, now the new Israel is analogous to the working class (Berdyayev 1936). Shifting the idea of being 'chosen' from a nation to a social class was noticed and criticized in the 1930s. Criticism could be heard from journalists considering themselves Marxist as well as from writers associated with Yiddish literature. Jan Szymański (Jan Hempel) criticized Bruno Jasiński for portraying the events in *I Burn Paris* as having the same supernatural motivation as the deluge in the Bible, because for a communist writer the cause for all social change should be the Marxist class struggle (Szymański 33). Scholem Asch in his trilogy, which carries the suggestive title *Deluge*, made the following complaint through the mouthpiece of a character modeled after Cezary Baryka, who claimed that initially race included the members of a particular tribe, one nation, regardless of whether they were rich or poor and now this division runs through class lines, which is to mean that racial identity is related to class identity which now includes nationality and religious affiliation (Asch 1983). From among the communists who Wat valued most were the so-called "old communists", "old Bolsheviks", "real Bolsheviks". His work often compares them to apostles or medieval sage-ascetics. In their representations, he accentuates all the characteristics connected with the ethical and spiritual dimension.

That is perhaps why Aleksander Wat's work often evokes "the nostalgic myth of a Second Revolution redeeming the first, depraved revolution" (Wat 1991: 153).

Writing about Paris in 1946, where Jean-Paul Sartre was gaining more recognition and in his steady attempt to convert Miłosz to Marxism, Tadeusz Kroński remarks that to the participants of Parisian cultural life, he "is in the mood for a provocation of the type: 'If you're so cultured, why don't you read, for example, Thucydides!'" (Miłosz 2007: 289). Perhaps it was out of spite that Miłosz made translating *The History of the Peloponnesian War* professor Gil's main occupation, one of the characters of *The Seizure of Power*. There was also a more important reason: revealing the laws governing civilizations as universal and, at the same time, as ones which cannot be opposed, as they are inscribed in the nature of the world, society or civilization, even though their horror is experienced by an individual person.

Thucydides, translated by professor Gil, begins with the notion that the meaning of words has been changed in order to justify unworthy behavior. (Miłosz 1995). This resonates not only with

Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (which Irena Krońska was reading at that time before going to sleep), but also with Aleksander Wat's reflections regarding the language of Stalinist propaganda. Miłosz's approach was slightly different as, writes Andrzej Walicki, he "believed in the historical necessity of New Faith and was ready to serve her cause" (Walicki 190). Miłosz presents this problem in a similar manner:

For five years I have loyally served my country, trying, to the best of my understanding, to fulfill my obligations as a writer and as a cultural attaché in The United States and in France. I was delighted to see the semi-feudal structure of Poland finally smashed, the universities opened to young workers and peasants, agrarian reform undertaken and the country finally set on the road to industrialization [...]. I thus had reasons to hold on to the new Poland which was heading towards socialism [...]. (Miłosz 1983: 207-208)

However, at the last moment, when they wanted to "baptize" him, he left Poland.

Wat points to another universal principle governing the world. He notices that "merging humanistic, socialist and universal ideals - they are three different names for one ideal [...] the finish line, towards which humanity is striving from their most distant beginnings" (Wat 2001: 74). The problem is that their realization does not always come about in a previously assumed manner. In describing the nation of Amenhotep IV, Wat shows how quickly the most beautiful ideas turn to tyranny. For Miłosz as well as for Wat, tyranny, despotism and totalitarianism are in the end associated with Soviet Russia.

Despite this, Wat after returning to the USSR is an active participant in its cultural life and there were no indications that he had attempted to join the enormous number of Jews leaving the country (Grabski, Berndt), although he did think about emigrating just before the war because of a "thick" anti-Semitic atmosphere.

Wat's decision to remain in the country could be explained by his treatment of communism as a faith that justifies everything. Later, however, he was to lose that faith. Since achieving the maximum alternative proved unsuccessful, then, thought Wat, the minimum alternative will be successful. If the revolution and the Soviet version of communism failed to ensure equality and security for everyone, then after the nightmare of the war, this security should be ensured to at least every Jew. Wat had every right to make this assumption after having read the foundational acts of "new" Poland. The entry found

in the declaration of July 1944 in the PKWN manifesto (“The Jews, whom the occupant so bestially annihilated, will now be assured of the rebuilding of their existence and the equality of rights *de jure* and *de facto*” (*PKWN Manifesto*) and the declaration found in the Polish People’s Republic program, wherein the party “organizes mass work to fight with reactionism, fascism and its remnants – racial hatred, nationalism and anti-Semitism” could have reinforced his assumptions. I have the impression that after returning to Poland, Wat’s contributions to some of the most important newspapers are not only those of a writer or a journalist, but of a Jew. It is no coincidence that at the meeting of the Pen Club in 1948 in Copenhagen it was Wat who protested against sending greetings to Jewish writers from Palestine and Arabic writers at the same time. This was happening at about the same time when the nation of Israel was being proclaimed.

In Copenhagen, according to Tadeusz Bereza, Wat argued that:

Send to both of them? [...] In the meantime, the situation of either of them is not the same. There is something about Jewish Palestine, Israel that is able to speak to writer’s imagination in a special way. Consider, if you will, these thoughts: after 200 centuries to return to one’s nest, to the Promised Land, to the reclaimed land! There is something extremely poignant about this. And this is so regardless of the experiences Jews had to endure not too long ago, which makes it all the more poignant if you connect those two thoughts. (Wat 2008: 486)

In his articles we find the word “city” or “town” (*Sztetl*), which then appeared quite frequently in publications relating to the Extermination. When he took the stage to speak to an international audience, for example during the Pen Club meeting, Wat used the conceptual cluster “reclaimed/promised” land towards Poles who after millennia “reclaimed” their west lands, as well as to Jews who had been waiting for millennia for their nation (Wat 2008: 363). Sensitive to the themes which today we associate with the Extermination, he describes the murder and robbery committed by friends against their peers (Wat 2008: 416). He reads Iwaszkiewicz’s *Wzlot* as a work “about Jews” (Wat 2001: 69. 416).

However, when it turns out that Jewish community residing in Poland does not enjoy the same rights as the Poles, that the condition for advancing in the government structures requires assuming a Polish name, and comrade Wiesław is not sympathetic to Jews holding higher offices in the Party (Werblan 108), it becomes obvious that the minimum plan did not succeed as well.

In *Native Realm*, Czesław Miłosz depicts a scene where Russian soldiers, sitting in a peasant's house, are calming down a German war prisoner wearing a warm sheepskin coat. They assure him that he is in no danger, that for him the war is over and that he will be sent to the rear right away. One of them without a word gets up and walks outside with the prisoner. Miłosz writes: "In a few minutes the soldier returned alone, dragging a white sheepskin coat that he threw next to his duffel bag". And then goadingly asks: "cruelty?" (Miłosz 1981: 141-142). Miłosz answers his own question: "but one has to place that incident in the context of that war". He reminds us, perhaps under the influence of Kroński, of the thousands of Soviet prisoners exterminated by Germans and the millions in planned executions. "But these Russian soldiers had murdered Germans not out of hatred but out of necessity. That necessity had taken the form either of the difficulties of transferring the prisoner to the rear or of a white sheepskin coat" (Miłosz 1981: 142). Miłosz does not rule out the possibility that the Soviet soldiers had the impression that something "cruel" had happened. He describes their behavior: a soldier who killed a prisoner: "sat down and rolled a cigarette. The melancholy way he inhaled his smoke and spat on the floor expressed the thoughts of all of them in that room on the frailty of human life: 'That's fate'" (Miłosz 1981: 141).

One can and should ask what one can do, one who does not have such a melancholy constitution, does not smoke cigarettes and does not have a tendency to spit on the floor. The answer to this question is relatively easy: nothing. It does not have much significance. In *The Seizure of Power*, the Red Army is presented as a blind force, impossible to stop, as it moves with the unstoppable force of lava. Piotr Kwinto, a character in the story, observes that this force of nature is reflected in the incessant movements of people and vehicles, military equipment and Soviet soldiers. (Miłosz 1995). The movement of this army is subject to the same laws of necessity, this time historic necessity much like the force of nature moving lava (Miłosz 1995).

During Wat's stay in Berkley, a conflict ensues between him and Miłosz. The cause of it was Miłosz's irritation at Wat's conviction that he will be greeted in America as a specialist on totalitarian Russia; meanwhile, he was not aware of the abundance of available literature and resources on Sovietology (Miłosz 1994). He was also not aware of the fact that no one, or almost no one, in America wants to hear about

such a Russia that he wants to and can talk about. Miłosz's opinion here resonates with Ewa Thompson's in relation to this kind of Sovietological discourse present in America and Western Europe. It is, according to Thompson, completely dominated by Russia.

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CZESŁAW MIŁOSZ AND OSIP MANDELSTAM ON LANGUAGE AND CULTURE: MEETINGS AND DEPARTURES¹

Miłosz's attitude to Mandelstam can be described as surprisingly ambivalent. The two poets share common ground in their thoughts on the foundations of European culture and also on the current role of poetry in regards to its heritage. Miłosz and Mandelstam are in agreement in their conclusions on this matter. On the other hand, Miłosz is not without words of criticism for the Russian poet. Initially, he signaled his reservations implicitly, by not commenting on the most disturbing aspects of Mandelstam's oeuvre, only to later express them directly in an iconoclastic essay concerning Mandelstam's stance towards communism.² Where is the cause of the silences and critical commentary? What is the reason behind this aversion to "understanding" the author of *Voronezh Notebooks*? It would appear to me that Miłosz was not entirely impressed with the direction of Mandelstam's

¹ For a more developed version of this article see Stankowska 2013: 234–258.

² In the 1990s, Miłosz wrote and published, first in *NaGłosu* (1996, no. 2) (Miłosz 2000/1: 278–285) and later in an abridged version in *Gazeta Wyborcza*, an iconoclastic commentary to Mandelstam's poem written in Voronezh, known as "Ode to Stalin". Jerzy Pomianowski, Anatol Najman and Adam Pomorski offered a polemical response to Miłosz's article, who, in turn, replied with an essay "Poet and Nation" (Miłosz 1996), explaining that he was concerned with the unique "national instinct" appropriate to Russian intelligentsia.

poetic evolution. Perhaps the changes that took place between the 1920s and 1930s, between such works as "Word and Culture", "Pushkin and Scriabin", "The Morning of Acmeism" and "Conversations about Dante" were not radical, but they were certainly significant and visible. The difference between them lies in the different points of emphasis regarding the cultural and autotelic function of the poetic word, which reflects the different attitude towards symbolism taken by the early and later Mandelstam.

Simply put, Mandelstam remains close to Miłosz mostly as an acmeist, an advocate for creativity, predicated on maintaining a harmonious balance between our attention to things and to the word, which is seen as a meeting place of what is sensual, existential and historical with what is spiritual, universal and metaphysical. Words, which are a unity, thanks to which it is possible to express, that is, to "embody", the truth of things, of man and of culture as it had developed from a Christian foundation. In a 1921 article, Mandelstam writes:

Whoever will raise high the word and show it to time, as the priest does the Eucharist, will be a second Joshua. [...] A living word does not signify an object, but freely chooses, as though for a dwelling place, this or that objective significance, materiality, some beloved body.

(Mandelstam 1977: 131)

A few years earlier, in the manifesto "The Morning of Acmeism" (1913, first published in 1919) Mandelstam, in a polemic with the symbolists and futurists, developed a program for striking a balance in poetry between various dimensions of words – their musical form, the conscious meaning and the horizon that a deployed word can evoke in a people, if they have been taught by poets, multidimensional sounds, significances and metaphysical meanings derived from speech. Mandelstam compared those three dimensions of poetry to the three dimensions of space that permeate every well-built house, palace, and cathedral. Drawing on architectural metaphors, Mandelstam suggested that the poetic word ought to build harmony between spirituality and the human existence with which nature endowed us. He wrote that "There is no equality, no competition. There is the complicity of those united in a conspiracy against emptiness and nonbeing" (Mandelstam 1972: 184). Miłosz would have regarded this program as not only beautiful but also very close to his own thoughts, as it touched on every important concern in his work. At the same

time, Miłosz was growing increasingly distant to Mandelstam, when, during the 1930s the latter developed the crystallographic theory of rhythm and ever more strongly emphasized the autonomy and autotelism of form.

Penetrating as best I can into the structure of the *Divina Commedia*, I come to the conclusion that the entire poem is a single unified and indivisible stanza. Or, to be more exact, not a stanza but a crystallographic shape, that is, a body. There is an unceasing drive toward the creation of form that penetrates the entire poem. The poem is a strictly stereometric body, one integral development of a crystallographic theme.

[...]

As in all true poetry, Dante's thinking in images is accomplished with the help of a characteristic of poetic material which I propose to call its transformability or convertibility.

[...]

Dante switched on the phonetic light.

[...]

if we were to hear Dante, we should be unexpectedly plunged into a flow of energy which is sometimes, as a whole, called 'composition,' sometimes, in particular, 'metaphor,' and sometimes, because of its evasive quality, 'simile,' and which gives birth to attributes in order that they might return into it, increase it by their melting and, having scarcely achieved the first joy of coming into existence, immediately lose their primogeniture in attaching themselves to the matter that is straining in among the thoughts and washing against them.

(Mandelstam 1977: 14, 19, 12, 8)

I have quoted this string of citations from "Conversation about Dante" for a reason, as it brings to the fore the extent to which in the 1930s Mandelstam reformulated the optics of his own thinking about poetry. This does not, of course, mean that the above-cited themes were absent in his earlier poetry. We can find them in, for example, "The Word and Culture" and in "On the Nature of the Word". In the 1920s their significance, however, was determined and limited by cultural theses.

Though we have no explicit evidence of Miłosz's polemical attitude towards Mandelstam, I believe that Miłosz could have distanced himself from the thoughts of the Russian poet, when another hierarchical arrangement appeared between two mutually corresponding themes ("cultural" and "purely poetic"), and, along with it, a somewhat different way of understanding the constant call to achieve the architectural harmony of the work and text, which was at first under-

stood as a “crystalized faith” (Mandelstam 1972: 192), and later, as a derivative of “inner image of structure” (Mandelstam 1972: 97), based most of all on phonetics and intonation. During the acmeistic period, the emphasis on the architectonics of cultural images shifted to the architectonics of sounds and their “form-creating impulse” (Mandelstam 1972: 96), subordinated to a related, but not identical with the first, poetic principle of the convertability³ of linguistic material. It is worth mentioning that this turn towards lyricism charged by “phonological energy” is sometimes interpreted as Mandelstam returning to his Jewish roots. The author of this thesis, Clare Cavanagh, finds in Mandelstam’s later poetry a shared testament to rebuilding “Jewish” poetics, in which coherence of the official culture is confronted by the chaos of the language used by unassimilated Jews. “). “For the Mandelstam of „Fourth Prose” and „Conversation About Dante”, the only true culture is a culture without walls, and his writing and created tradition thrive on borderlines and boundaries, on „incoherence and gaps” (Cavanagh 1991: 319). It is an expression of opposition to the official, in this case party line, post-revolutionary culture of Russia; it is also a new, qualitative attempt to protect one’s own identity.

He turns to the „holes” and „gaps” in his Jewish past, to the places that had refused to be filled with foreign content, as he creates an identity and a tradition that cannot be swallowed up by an all-consuming „alien regime.” Homelessness, foreignness, disruption, incoherence become the essence of an art and a culture that are made, like Mandelstam himself, of „air, perforations and truancy” (CPL, 324). [...] The poet-Jew need not fear a missing acropolis, a disrupted tradition, a shattered identity. Continuity and value now derive precisely from missing pieces and shattered wholes [...] through Dante, he learns to use this linguistic confusion to his, and poetry’s, advantage. (Cavanagh 1991: 323, 333)

And later:

What had been for Mandelstam the „shameful speech (*postydnaia rec*)” of his family is converted into the „blatantly shameless (*narocito besstyjoaja*)” speech of Dante’s Italian, and of his own late verse. Mandelstam’s Jewish inheritance of speechlessness, of linguistic chaos, had been his enemy, and culture’s. Now that he himself has become culture’s enemy, his inheritance has become not simply an ally. It is the very essence of poetic language, the energetic, endlessly disruptive renegade that forever challenges „so-called culture,” that affronts its propriety, ignores its dictums and disrupts its structures. (Cavanagh 1991: 334–335)

³ The meaning of “convertability” of speech was interestingly presented by Clarence Brown, though in reference to Mandelstam’s prose work. Cf. (Brown 1967).

I am not entirely convinced that Cavanagh is correct in so strongly identifying the new poetics of “form-creating impulse” and “convertibility of speech” with the Jewish tradition and the speech of unassimilated Jews, all the more so since, as she herself writes (citing Kiril Taranovsky’s 1976 book *Essays on Mandel’shtam*), in the 1930s “Jewish themes ‘almost disappear’” (Cavanagh 1991: 318) in Mandelstam’s work. Cavanagh’s observations are, however, very interesting in that they introduce the theme of the poet’s choice to be outside of culture, understood as a bastion of hierarchical forms subordinated to the element of life. I would like to draw attention to a theme that resounds with great force, one that is basically foreign to Miłosz’s thinking.

If I am correct, if indeed Miłosz was critical of this shift in Mandelstam’s thinking about the nature of the word, then this would be yet another example of Miłosz’s constant reticence towards all types of lyricism, which views language and the inner (in this case intonational-musical) perfection and coherence of form as more important than speech, and the poetic craft as more important than the cultivation of culture. We should add that lyricism, as a result of this shift, might, perhaps paradoxically, lose its immunity to any external discourses: obviously foreign to the native tradition that pays more heed to the spirit of the age than to the questions posed by one’s native culture. These questions not only stood at the center of Mandelstam’s images of antiquity and of a world inhabited by man but they were also the foundation for ideas concerning the deeply Hellenistic nature of Russian speech, ideas which were common in his earlier poetry and work. The shift which later takes place manifests itself, first of all, as an intensification of themes associated with existentially experienced history and the tragedy of someone who is now subjected to the modern, and not the “intersecting” dimension of time, as described in “Pushkin and Scriabin”. Simultaneously, in his non-poetic writing, especially in “Conversation about Dante”, theses connected to the purely poetic quality become more pronounced and are presented in a way that suggests associations with symbolism and formalism. In one of the key texts indicating his understanding of poetry in the 1930s, Mandelstam writes: “the purely historical approach to Dante is just as unsatisfactory as the political or theological” (Mandelstam 1977: 16). Instead of this, he will point to the necessity of explaining the “inner illumination of Dante’s space by light – light derived from

nothing more than the structural elements of his work" (Mandelstam 1972: 98). He will exhort others to take on "the study of the mutual relation of creative rapture and the work" (Mandelstam 1972: 132).

Such an appreciation of poetic virtues had to go together with decreased attention to what should be "embodied" in language, and for what reason. Miłosz could have perceived this shift in emphasis as a sign of degradation, or, at any rate, as a weakening of the cultural function of poetry. He often repeated that this undesired effect corresponds to, or perhaps is a consequence of, limiting the understanding of the word, which must "strive toward the heart of things", and at the same time "be always on the side of *mythos*" (Miłosz 1990/2: 174). He consistently resisted even the smallest indications – either legitimate or not – that could have suggested the weakening of the cultural power of the word, which he – just like Mandelstam himself – tied to historiographical, anthropological, and eschatological themes. Miłosz was certain that even the highest level of attentiveness to poetic quality could not compensate any possible losses.

I suspect that herein lies the cause of Miłosz's silence in regards to the later work of Mandelstam, and also the deep, poetological source of Miłosz's surprising claim regarding Mandelstam's susceptibility to the discourses and attitudes of his era. These claims were certainly influenced to a large degree by interpretations put forth by American researchers, with whom Miłosz was familiar. I am referring here particularly to Gregory Freidin's *A Coat of Many Colors* (1987), which Miłosz cited in his *Commentary on "Ode to Stalin"*, without, however, including its revealing subtitle: *Osip Mandelstam and his Mythologies of Self-Presentation*⁴. Other works which refer to Freidin's text include Donald Davie's *From the Marches of Christendom*, which touches on the opposing views of Miłosz and Mandelstam regarding the idea of heresy, as well as a review written in a similar vein by the same researcher of Aleksander Fiut's books *Moment wieczny (Eternal moment)* and Gregory Freidin's *A Coat of Many Colors*.

Even if we exclude these titles and slightly weaken the rhetorically sharpened thesis, we can still assume that Miłosz as a reader of Mandelstam's poetry could not remain indifferent to what was written in the same place but was nonetheless dramatically contrasted: an acme-

⁴ The type of references Miłosz made to this book is described by Clare Cavanagh (Cavanagh 2009).

istic hymn that expresses faith in the word and a story that emerges in its wake with heightened strength – the story about the drama of speech. He could have concluded that this evolution was proof of his resignation, also as an expression of the necessary distance – “style” – so essential to conquer despair, which he had always experienced and concealed.

Indeed, Mandelstam’s later poetry very clearly registers the awareness of the deepening process of degradation, loss, absence of the word – the loss of speech and the disintegration of man. This is accompanied by a long period of silence in the poet’s biography. However, that is not what is decisive here. Even when Mandelstam begins to write again after his revitalizing stay in Armenia, the expression of loss and the impossibility of the word appears in his poetry more often, with *Voronezh Notebooks* testifying to the irrevocability of this process. At the same time, the dramatic events of life linked his thinking about language with the situation of the subject who is vulnerable to degradation and who can no longer speak, let alone teach, not, as was the case earlier, with considerations regarding the foundations of culture (considerations which were dear to Miłosz). Though in a poem from 1931, dedicated to Anna Achmatowa, Mandelstam writes:

Сохрани мою речь навсегда за привкус несчастья и дыма,
За смолу кругового терпенья, за совестный деготь труда.
Так вода в новгородских колодцах должна быть черна и сладима,
Чтобы в ней к Рождеству отразилась семью плавниками звезда.

(Mandelstam 1998: 168)

Preserve my words for their after-taste of misery and smoke,
for the resins of circular patience, the honest tar of labor.
The way water in Novogrod wells must be honey-black
So by Christmas you can see, reflected, a star with seven fins

(Mandelstam 1973: 195)

And even though in another poem from the same year, he repeated the hope that: “So all through the night the blue polar foxes, / will shine at me in their primeval beauty” (Mandelstam 1998: 159), when the Stalinist darkness was steadily thickening, eclipsing the sky and sunny beaches, he bore witness, almost uninterruptedly, to the impossibility of realizing these desires – desires still remembered, though

no longer valid, as they were unreachable and impossible to fulfill, precisely because of the absence of speech. Mandelstam's later poetry ever more forcefully conveys the impending helplessness of someone who desires to sing but who can no longer do it, of someone who perfectly knows the value and the need of the harmony which has been seized from speech, but who can no longer retrieve it despite the history he is experiencing.

Народу нужен свет и воздух голубой,
И нужен хлеб и снег Эльбруса.

И не с кем посоветоваться мне,
А сам найду его едва ли –
Таких прозрачных плачущих камней
Нет ни в Крыму, ни на Урале.

Народу нужен стих таинственно-родной,
Чтоб от него он вечно просыпался
И льнянокудрю каштановой волной –
Его дыханьем умывался.

(Mandelstam 1998: 208)

Mankind needs light and clear blue air
And it needs bread and Elbrus snow.

**And there is no one to consult with me,
While I will hardly find one on my own:**
Not in the Urals, not in the Crimea –
There are no such transparent, weeping stone.

Mankind needs a poem mysteriously familiar,
To be awakened by it all his days
And in the sound of it to lave forever –
As in a flaxen curl, a nut-brown wave.

(Mandelstam 2014: 49, emphasis mine)

The subject of the poems included in *Voronezh Notebooks* frequently betrays the author's deprivation of speech. Alone and mute he listens to his own helplessness.

Пою, когда гортань сыра, душа суха,
И в меру влажен взор, и не хитрит сознание.
Здорово ли вино? Здоровы ли меха?
Здорово ли в крови Колхиды колыханье?
И грудь стесняется, без языка тиха:

Уже не я пою, – поет мое дыханье –
И в горных ножных слух, и голова глуха.

(Mandelstam 1998: 214)

I sing when my throat is damp, my soul dry,
Sight fairly moist and the mind clear.
Are the grapes in good condition? The wine-skins?
And the stirrings of Colchis in the blood?

**But my chest tightens, I'm tongue-tied:
It's no longer me singing – my breathing sings –,**
My ears sheathed in mountains, head hollow.

(Mandelstam 1991: 78 emphasis mine)

Nadezhda Mandelstam wrote movingly in her “Mozart and Salieri” about this loss of language, this absence of speech as a particularly weighty motif in her husband’s poetry, connecting this observation with comments about Mandelstam surrendering himself to the rhythm which the word alone deafened, stifled and concealed.

For Mandelstam,

listening to oneself eventually turned into a murmur and instead of one triumphant sound there appeared a rhythmic totality. [...] a creative process in its preliminary stage presented itself in the following manner: initial anxiety, a resounding collection of forms, which is to say a “silent choir” barely audible to the ear, the beginnings of a murmur in which a trace of rhythm is already present – and finally – the first words. Instead of anxiety what finally triumphs is the pleasure of the first discoveries. And following this, the poet is besieged with a new misfortune: the necessity of finding the lost word.

(Mandelstam, Nadezhda 2000; 38–39)

It goes without saying that Miłosz, even in his most dramatic work, never crossed this threshold. He conquered despair with the hope that speech, as well as man, can be saved by preserving the distance between drama and word; between language, which history creates out of speech, and the word, wherein the poet, despite trauma, obstinately testifies to the possibility of order and beauty, which Mandelstam, the acmeist, called the architecture of the word. The concluding stanza of the relatively early poem by Miłosz devoted to faithful speech seems here to be symbolic.

Są chwile kiedy wydaje się, że zmarnowałem życie.
Bo ty jesteś mową upodlonych,

mową nierozumnych i nienawidzących
 siebie bardziej może od innych narodów,
 mową konfidentów,
 mową pomieszanych,
 chorych na własną niewinność.

(Miłosz 1985: 181)

Now, I confess my doubt.
 There are moments when it seems to me I have squandered my life.
 For you are a tongue of the debased,
 of the unreasonable, hating themselves
 even more than they hate other nations,
 a tongue of informers,
 a tongue of the confused,
 ill with their own innocence.

(Miłosz 2003: 245)

This is what Miłosz writes only to discover, a moment later, at the conclusion of the poem, a way to protect the word from the degrading influence of history. The roles of the subject and the mother tongue are reversed in these phrases. Polish language – homeland, approached by the emigrant as an enclave of what is familial and one's own (this is a theme that is very present also in the essays of the early Mandelstam⁵) is finally presented as a subject of therapeutic activity by the poet.

Moja wierna mowo,
 może to jednak ja muszę ciebie ratować.
 Więc będę dalej stawiać przed tobą miseczki z kolorami
 jasnymi i czystymi jeżeli to możliwe,
 bo w nieszczęściu potrzebny jakiś ład czy piękno.

(Miłosz 1985: 182)

Faithful mother tongue,
 perhaps after all it's I who must try to save you.
 So I will continue to set before you little bowls of colors
 bright and pure if possible,
 for what is needed in misfortune is a little order and beauty.

(Miłosz 2003: 245)

⁵ We find claims in many of Mandelstam's works regarding the necessity of discovering in poetry the real "essence of Russian speech" (Mandelstam 1972: 23).

This theme pervades Miłosz's work. Even in this remarkably dark volume, openly revealing his concealed despair, Miłosz wrote years later:

Tylko nie wyznania. Własne życie
Tak mnie dojadło, że znalazłbym ulgę
Opowiadając o nim.
[...]
Więc co mnie powstrzymuje?
[...]
Nawet gdybym dojrzał do skargi hiobowej,
Lepiej zamilczeć, pochwalać niezmienny
Porządek rzeczy. Nie, to co innego
Nie pozwala mi mówić. Kto cierpi, powinien
Być prawdomówny. Gdzież tam, ile przebrań,
Ile komedii, litości nad sobą!
Fałsz uczuć odgaduje się po fałszu frazy.

(Miłosz 2000/2: 36)

Everything but confessions. My own life
Annoys me so, I would find relief
In telling about it.
[...]
So what restrains me?
[...]
Even had I been ready for a Job's complaint,
It is better to keep silent, to praise the immutable
Order of things. No, something else
Forbids me to speak. Whoever suffers
Should be a teller of the truth. Should? How,
With all the disguises, comedy, self-pity?
Falseness of feeling results in a false phrase.
I value style too much to tak the risk.
Tylko nie wyznania. Własne życie
Tak mnie dojadło, że znalazłbym ulgę

(Miłosz 2003: 690)

In one of the letters to Konstanty Jeleński, we can find a passage in which Miłosz reveals yet another, perhaps the most important, reason for tempering his pessimism and knowledge. It is his fear of finding himself outside culture.

I have a difficult life. And when I reproach myself for anything related to my writing, it is that my pessimism was not revealed in the way it should have; ho-

wever, **then one crosses a certain limit of human decorum and this is distinctly beyond culture.** (Miłosz, Jeleński 2011: 215, emphasis mine)

Of course, obstacles and fears with which Miłosz had to struggle bear no comparison to Mandelstam's. Nonetheless, Miłosz had the right to keep to himself his opinion regarding Mandelstam's shift in his poetry from the idea of speech as an instrument for building the architectonic edifice of culture, in line with his manifesto of acmeism, which places emphasis on internal form. From the program of returning "rules of identity" to poetry, in his polemics with symbolists and futurists (the program which allowed Mandelstam to say that "culture became the church" (Mandelstam 1972: 194) for the faith that poetic form, in preserving its "unity" and coherence, and whose aim is to "transcend oneself", can offer the poet something more? What? Perhaps freedom which does not exist in the world? The promise of safely lingering inside "verbal space"⁶, a space governed by its own laws, self-sufficient and thus independent. These kinds of arguments would not have convinced Miłosz. All the more so because, paradoxically, this "clean" language, too directly and without the comfort of distance, told the truth about someone whom the epoch, its history and lost speech brought death. Miłosz might have read *Voronezh Notebooks* as far removed, and even contradictory, to the desire he held all his life that poetry, referring to what is permanent and beautiful, unflinchingly proved our hymnic defiance of death.

Was Miłosz fair in his reading and assessment of *Voronezh Notebooks*? I do not think so, though one cannot deny that he was consistent. Conducting his "feud" with the Mandelstam⁷, he certainly had deeper reasons than those he provocatively expressed in *Commentary to "Ode to Stalin"*, even if in the second perspective he omitted one of the key themes of Osip Emilyevich's thoughts.

In Mandelstam's non-poetic work from the late 1920s, there appears a thought that theology and the cultural significance of poetry and art in general (even as asemantic as music) does not only have to be built immanently, that is, on the basis of the problems and key questions regarding the condition of man and the state of culture. The core and vehicle of this theology could also be the life of the artist

⁶ This Mandelstamian description used by Miłosz in *The Land of Ulro* proves that Miłosz was familiar with "Conversations about Dante". Cf. (Miłosz 1984).

⁷ Cf. (Miłosz 2004).

himself. A moving judgment regarding the decisive role of fate can be found in Mandelstam's essay, "Pushkin and Scriabin", written most likely in 1915 or 1916. He writes:

I wish to speak of Scriabin's death as of the highest act of his creativity. It seems to me the artist's death ought not to be excluded from the chain of his creative achievements, but rather examined as the last conclusive link. From this wholly Christian point of view, Scriabin's death is amazing. It not only is remarkable as the fabulous posthumous growth of the artist in the eyes of the masses, but also serves as it were as the source of this creativity, as its teleological cause. (Mandelstam 1977: 123)

We could say that in those words Mandelstam prophetically opened a perspective on his own death, which he had not yet sensed. This perspective was not only on his death and it was also not especially on his death. In his essay, "Pushkin and Scriabin", Mandelstam suggested what seems to be more important – that such a reading of a work of art is possible only when we look at European art with respect to the tradition from which it grew, questioning and remembering the cultural sources of which it is a fruit. Mandelstam, much like Eliot and Miłosz, often reminded us that this source is Christianity. He did so – and this is a feature that distinguished him from the abovementioned artists – with extraordinary bravery, with no consideration for the dangers of stylistic excess, figures of incarnation and redemption. Before using the former figure in 1922 in order to describe the Hellenistic spirit of Russian speech, he used it in his earlier work in commemoration of Scriabin's death.

Christian artists are the freedmen of the idea of redemption, rather than slaves, and they are not preachers. All the two-thousand-year-old culture, thanks to the wonderful charitableness of Christianity, is the release of the world into freedom for play, for spiritual gaiety, for the 'imitation' of Christ.' [...] **While nourishing art, surrendered its flesh to art, offered art the supremely real fact of redemption as an unshakeable metaphysical foundation, Christianity demanded nothing in return.** Christian art is therefore not threatened by the danger of inner impoverishment. It is inexhaustible, endless, since, as it triumphs over time, it condenses grace into magnificent clouds and empties them out in life-giving rain. (Mandelstam 1977: 124–125, emphasis mine)

Indeed, this image is far from Christian orthodoxy, but also one that dramatically embodies one of the most important sources of European culture, though extremely uncertain in an era of "the scientific

worldview". It is not by coincidence that at the end of the essay cited, in direct connection with the thesis on death as a last stage of creativity, Mandelstam formulated the famous sentences about "transverse dimension of time" and "harmony as a crystallized eternity". Sentences, we should add, that endowed his lessons on the three dimensions of the word described in "The Morning of Acmeism" with absolute significance, and were never doubted by Miłosz. This telling coincidence draws our attention to the fact that the importance of the cultural goal, so emphatically formulated in the acmeistic period and somewhat muted in his later poetry, could be seen differently. Mandelstam suggests in "Pushkin and Scriabin" that the poetry concentrated on itself, autonomous art, even that which in a direct way does not have the intention of engaging in a cultural dialogue could recoup its social and cultural meaning thanks to the truth of drama experienced and accepted by the artist. Even if we ignore the voice of the poet whose voice was taken and who lost or rejected the right to use it, his silence and tormented body can speak. "The tissue of our world is renewed by death" (Mandelstam 1972: 191). Mandelstam wrote "Remember at all costs! To conquer oblivion even at the price of death: that is Scriabin's motto, that is the heroic aspiration of his art!" (Mandelstam 1972: 191). I think that the gravest indiscretion in Miłosz's *Commentary to "Ode to Stalin"* lies in its lack of respect for this truth, expressed and affirmed by Mandelstam, the acmeist.

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P a r t F o u r

INTERCULTURAL
COMMUNICATION IN POLAND

THE OTHER IN POLAND. INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION IN A NATIONAL STATE

This text discusses intercultural communication in Poland after 1989, especially the influence of post-totalitarian memory on current relations between the dominant population and ethnic minorities. Legal solutions after 1989, although they helped to initiate the process of multicultural social integration and accelerated the departure from the (ideologically and culturally homogenous) national state towards multiculturalism, only slightly modified unofficial attitudes of Poles towards the Other.

1. *Homo postsovieticus* – the social context of intercultural communication in Poland

The political breakthrough that took place in 1989 in Poland demonstrated to Poles that the use of freedom can be as difficult as its recovery. The unrestricted freedom of language use, of shaping one's own identity, forming beliefs and professing faith in a society which had previously lived within the strict boundaries delineated by the regime to be a challenge for the Poles. Slowly, it became clear that freedom was not anarchy and that it had its ethical boundaries. One of the freedoms that required restraint was primarily the freedom of

speech. Attempts to subdue the anarchy of words were countered by violent reactions: „it violates the right to free speech”, „people have the right to know”. The answers provided by the state were as follows: the law on the Polish language¹, legal solutions for the protection of personal data² and (Waglowski) personal property, stalking³, the dissemination of racial and ethnic hatred, including hate speech (Waglowski).

The involvement of the Catholic Church in the recovery of freedom and its development after 1989 generated the problem of the neutrality of the state in matters regarding one's beliefs and worldview. By 2015, two social attitudes clashed within Poland; it was seen as a state in which all religions enjoy equal rights, a state free from public signs of religious beliefs, and now the „True Poland” is a country of Catholics.

An exchange of national holidays, amendment of the constitution, restoration of the senate, transition from a socialist to a free market economy, opening of borders, accession to the European Union and NATO, intensification of globalization processes, and last but not least widespread migration of young people did little to neutralize Poles' post-totalitarian identity.

The increasing interest of young people in uniformed classes and armed forces is an escape from freedom; young people believe that „in the uniformed services it is the commander that decides and there are clear procedures.” Adolescents born in the free Poland give up the possibility of making their own choices.

A guarded satisfaction with democracy and freedom is confirmed by the low turnout in elections, the blame placed on politicians for every possible failure, and a belief in the responsibility of the state, witnessed by the recently fashionable saying: „the state has proved of no use”. The state is a being which lifts Poles' personal responsibility for their own decisions and co-responsibility for fellow citizens.

The above analysis of communication patterns of Poles after 1989 is confirmed by the new definition of the concept *homo sovieticus*, proposed by Fr. Józef Tischner (Tischner 1992) and Jerzy Turowicz (Tu-

¹ The Law on the Polish language, Journal of Laws of 1999, no. 90, item 999, <http://isap.sejm.gov.pl/DetailsServlet?id=WDU19990900999> (31.07.2014).

² The Law on personal data protection, Journal of Laws of 1997, no. 133, item 883, <http://isap.sejm.gov.pl/DetailsServlet?id=WDU19971330883> (31.07.2014).

³ Amendment of the Penal Code, Journal of Laws 2011, no. 72, item 381.

rowicz). Fr. J. Tischner draws attention to the widespread attempt to escape from freedom, a phenomenon previously described by Erich Fromm (Fromm). According to Fr. J. Tischner, being liberated from one bondage, Poles seek a new one (Tischner 1993). J. Turowicz describes a unique incapacitation of the contemporary *homo sovieticus*, who expects all his problems to be solved by the state and the authorities. J. Turowicz's *homo sovieticus* cannot be critical, does not take initiative and is not creative.

However, these are not the only features that identify the post-totalitarian attitudes of many contemporary Poles. Interpersonal relations reveal features of the earlier *homo sovieticus* as fixed in social memory: subordination to a group, escape from responsibility, opportunism, aggressiveness towards the weak and humility towards the stronger, a lack of independent thinking and action, expectations that „someone will do something” for us, and intellectual slavery (Wdowiak).

Results of research on contemporary intercultural communication in Poland confirm that the contemporary *homo sovieticus* simultaneously adopts mutually exclusive attitudes:

- attempts to escape from freedom are often accompanied by equally destructive, immoderate immersion in freedom, bordering on anarchy, especially with regard to freedom of speech,
- global behavior and expectations are accompanied by cultural identity reinforcement, constructed on the Polish messianic vocation,
- a low sense of self-worth is accompanied by expectations that others will treat Poland and Poles in a special way, full of appreciation and respect.

The above analyses show that social relations between Poles are conditioned by totalitarian experience. This also applies to the communication between the dominant population and the minority groups.

2. Assimilation – intercultural relations in Poland after 1945

The new system, imposed on Poland after 1945, offered equal rights to citizens, regardless of their nationality. The idea of „communist internationalism” (Rozenal, Judin) constituted a guarantee of minority rights. However, the still vivid memories of wartime perse-

cutions and post-war „settling of old scores” – the resettlement of the Germans, Operation Vistula and the migration of the population to areas previously occupied by indigenous peoples, especially in Masuria and the Regained Territories – generated ethnic conflicts. According to the 1952 Constitution, the working people of towns and villages were the sovereign of the People’s Republic of Poland.⁴ This constitution vested all citizens with identical rights and obligations. It recognised that the nationality of citizens was their private matter, yet it gave citizens the right to preserve their identity. In practice, however, the Polish authorities sought to assimilate national minorities. The national policy of the communist regime was contingent on the belief that cultural, national, ethnic, and linguistic minorities were wrong.

Sociologists and historians point to the assimilation process as a legal and social solution that strengthens intra-community relations (Funkenstein). As part of the assimilation processes, ethnic minorities, becoming ever similar to the dominant population, acquire, e.g., its axiological system, customs, language, and thus become fully-fledged citizens of a given country. Assimilation policy is to minimize the difference between members of ethnic minorities and the dominant society. This process is usually characterized by unilateral adaptation and absorption.

The basis for assimilation efforts is the legal and pragmatic requirement of national and ethnic minorities acquiring the language of the dominant group. The necessity of using the dominant language also in informal situations leads to the absorption of the attendant way of thinking, axiological system, the ways of categorizing and understanding concepts according to the dominator’s experience. Language conversion weakens a person’s identity and destroys his or her cultural roots (Kłoskowska). Johann Gottfried Herder and Wilhelm Humboldt drew attention to the identity function of the language (Schaff).

An ideologised newspeak grew more and more widespread in totalitarian societies. The society in the totalitarian state was equal / uniform, accepted the order (standards) established at the top, gave in to one-way communication, and did not ask questions. Highlighting the minority cultures would have divided the society, generated ques-

⁴ Constitution of the People of the Republic of Poland adopted by the Constitutional Assembly on 22 July 1952.

tions and enforced bilateral communication; in other words, it would have neutralised newspeak and weakened the authority of the regime.

The history of discrimination against national minorities in Poland can be split into several stages. In the mid-1950s there was a mass economic migration of the population, which was conducive to assimilation. The dominating society took over individuals moving away from the minority groups; hence, the consolidation reactions on the other side, which resulted in the emergence of closed ghetto-like minority communities. At the same time, the growing Stalinist repressions resulted in the concealment of ethnic identity and nationality and prevented its manifestation; knowledge in this respect was socially limited. At the time of the political „thaw”, those guilty of earlier terror were sought; it was the others who were to blame and that is why monitoring minorities grew even more stringent and they were persecuted for being disloyal. The Polish United Workers' Party (Polish: PZPR) was officially against nationality discrimination, yet in practice minority associations were required, like all citizens and associations, to implement in their activities the dominant party policies in order to speed up the assimilation process. Their attention was to focus on folklore and artistic activity. The state financed folk singers and theatrical groups, but at the same time limited minority education. These activities culminated in the year 1968, when Poles began to increasingly hide their being different. The Resolution of the Second Plenum of the Polish United Workers Party of 1976 „On the moral and political unity of the Polish nation”⁵ reinforced the assumption „of the uniform character of the Polish state”, which was accompanied by further discriminatory actions. This policy brought about the ethnic conflicts inherited from the time of communism. The widespread lack of knowledge about minority cultures in Poland resulted in the reinforcement of negative stereotypes of ethnicity and caused a reluctance to admit to being „other // foreign”. The earlier policy of a homogenous state was reflected in school curricula. Young people learned about the minorities living in Poland during history lessons. There was no information on the influence of minority groups on the development of Polish science and culture. School textbooks did not broach the subject of the current status of minorities. No variety was

⁵ See *II Plenary Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party*, Warsaw, 1976.

allowed in the state, so it could not find its reflection in the education system. Poles were reconciled with the idea that they were a monocultural nation, and that a plurality of cultures, ideologies and religions threatens the stability of the country. They inherited a post-totalitarian fear of difference.

3. From integration to multiculturalism – intercultural relations in Poland after 1989

The Catholic and national character of the Solidarity movement did not result in a modification of Poles' attitudes towards minorities and their social situation. Only the political breakthrough of 1989 changed the legal situation of national and ethnic minorities in Poland. The Law of 7 September 1991 on the educational system introduced a requirement of maintaining national, ethnic, linguistic, and religious identities, in particular via learning the minority language, history and culture in public schools.⁶ The Law of 29 December 1992 on radio and television broadcasting mandated the public radio and public television to take into account the needs of national and ethnic minorities.⁷ The 1997 Constitution of the Republic of Poland stressed the necessity to protect the rights of minorities. The nation became the subject and source of sovereign power – a collective in a political rather than an ethnic sense. All those who had Polish citizenship and those who held such citizenship after November 11, 1918 became the Polish people. Next to the concept of the 'nation' there emerged the concept of 'civil society', which influenced the direction of Poland's state policy through various interest groups, including minorities, all pursuing their multiple goals. This constitution provided all citizens belonging to national and ethnic minorities with the freedom to preserve and develop their own language, to preserve customs and traditions, and to develop their own culture, enabling them to create their own educational and cultural institutions for the protection of religious identity. It also enshrined the right to unrestricted practice of religion, guaranteed freedom of conscience and religion, prohibited

⁶ The Law of 7 September 1991 on the educational system, Journal of Laws 1991, no. 95, item 425.

⁷ Law of 29 December 1992 on radio and television broadcasting, Journal of Laws 1992, no. 7, item 34.

discrimination or privilege on the grounds of religion. The Republic of Poland, as a democratic country, granted minorities free access to cultural goods, public services, education and health services, and provided suffrage rights and the right to freedom of association (Waglowksi). The Law of 6 June 1997 on the Penal Code (Waglowksi) provides for the punishment of offenses committed on grounds of ethnicity, while the Law on the protection of personal data (Waglowksi) prohibits the processing of data revealing ethnic origin. The legal personality of national and ethnic minorities in Poland was defined by the Law of 6 January 2005.⁸

Minorities in Poland, apart from constitutional legal safeguards, have guaranteed protection by means of international legal acts. As a member of the United Nations, Poland must respect the provisions of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of 1966 and the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic Religious and Linguistic Minorities. Both prohibit discrimination on the grounds of race, religion, sex, political beliefs, social origin, and nationality. In 1995, Poland signed the Council of Europe's European Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, which guarantees that every member of a national minority has the right to freely determine his or her nationality by learning the mother tongue and in the mother tongue, and to freely use it in private and public life.

The assimilation processes that reinforce totalitarianism were replaced by legal solutions aiming at the integration of minority groups with the dominant group. Integration as a form of relationship at the intersection of cultural groups within one state raises many concerns. Interesting from the point of view of anthropology of communication is Todd Endelman's indication of integration as one of the elements of assimilation. According to the author, integration results in the opening up of minority groups to the dominant society. However, T. Endelman sees that this opening up is only one-sided, and therefore combines this process with acculturation and assimilation (Endelman). The transition from totalitarianism to democracy has changed the flow of information; interpersonal communication is now bi-directional and this applies as well to the relationships between the dominant and minority populations.

⁸ Law of 6 January 2005 on national and ethnic minorities and on the regional language. Journal of Laws of 2005. No. 17, item 141, No. 62, item 550; Journal of Laws of 2009, No. 31, item 206, No. 157, item 1241.

Anthony Giddens drew attention to the possibilities of such a partnership agreement within integration (Giddens). The model of the relationship proposed by him suggests replacing one-way assimilation with two-way integration. The author sees integration as a way to organize the various elements that make up the society. This order refers to the cultural convention and the axiological system and includes relations between individuals and social groups (Piekut).

In the case of integration, the relationship between the dominant society and the minority should result from the inclusion of culturally distinct elements in existing social systems in such a way that they do not interfere with the harmonious and effective functioning of these systems and do not eliminate their identity components. Successful integration is a complex, two-way, long-lasting, and multidimensional process.

The most frequently cited indications of successful integration of culturally distinct communities are as follows:

- the attainment by members of such communities of appropriate language competence,
- finding employment in occupations corresponding to the qualifications of members of the ethnic community,
- reaching proper economic status,
- their participation in political life,
- no conflicts with the law.

None of the above signals includes the determinants that a culturally diverse society should include:

- a long-lasting sense of one's own cultural distinctness,
- skilful functioning at the intersection of cultures.

From the perspective of communication, the integration process cannot be considered successful without the two last factors as it does not envisage the protection of identity.

This is moreover confirmed by the fact that the enthusiasts of this form of inter-community relations consider as integrated such a social system in which the goals set by a given culture are fully accepted by all individuals and achieved through socially acceptable means. When the term „given culture” applies to the dominant culture, it means that we have to deal with a complete assimilation process rather than with integration. Therefore, the aim of the legal solutions currently in place in Poland should be to introduce multicultural relations.

Multiculturalism has developed its own patterns of intercultural relations management. These relationships are based on respect for all possible differences in culture, origin, religion, or customs, and help to create open state communities, in which culturally distinct national communities coexist (Stefańska). Proponents of multiculturalism believe that members of minority groups should maintain their linguistic and cultural distinctiveness, as this does not endanger any other national identity. According to them, the identity of one's own cultural distinctness enhances tolerance for different lifestyles. Not only does the policy of multiculturalism grant equal rights to minorities without the requirement to renounce other cultural affiliations, but it also invests them with special rights, conditional on ethnicity.

The legal solutions introduced in Poland after 1989, offering special rights to minorities, gave rise to multiculturalism, but have had little influence on the social attitudes of modern Poles towards minorities. This means that legitimate and sufficient legal provisions have not been reflected in private and public interpersonal relationships. Many Poles find it difficult to accept the fact that they are diverse as a nation and have different values systems established in their first languages, developed over the centuries, also through the type of intercultural contacts. Hence, in the social debate we can often hear terms such as: „a real Pole,” „a true patriot,” „a universal value system,” and semantic and axiological modifications of concepts of „patriotism” and „nationalism,” while the my / other category is seen as the friend / foe opposition.

The myth that all Poles have been invariably tolerant and therefore have never committed racist crimes, did not participate in the extermination of the Jews or have not discriminated against the Roma, is a manifestation of post-communist conformism and opportunism. Debunking this myth provokes a violent defensive reaction and consequently strengthens social attitudes that do not accept ethnic differences.

A lack of widespread knowledge about minorities generates fear, which in turn triggers aggression and is a source of negative stereotypes. Core school curricula, though already modernized, fail to provide knowledge about minority cultures present in Poland, do not inform students on their influence on the development of the dominant culture, nor do they prepare for intercultural communication. The Polish school creates national attitudes and educates the future

citizens of a monocultural nation-state. National minorities contribute to this, too; after the assimilation efforts of the totalitarian state, they are very slow to transform into open communities, oriented not only to intra-community communication, but also to communication outside a given group. Studies on intercultural communication have confirmed that the most common barriers to communication at the intersection of cultures are as follows:

- no widespread knowledge of minority cultures,
- no knowledge of minority languages and their legacy,
- the national / monocultural character of Polish education,
- lack of motivation to increase knowledge about minorities,
- the need to settle old scores, resulting from tainted intercultural relationships in the past,
- a sense of guilt due to the Holocaust and discrimination.

The above barriers delay the introduction of integration and multicultural solutions.

4. Polish social attitudes towards the Other

A departure from the national state towards integration and multiculturalism requires, above all, modifications of the social attitudes adopted by citizens vis-à-vis clearly distinct sections of Polish society in diverse communication situations, including unofficial ones. The most disruptive social attitude is a pattern of behaviour, accepted by some as non-aggressive, consisting in the passive rejection of everything that is different. It consists in disregarding differences and being ignorant of others, the different ones, assuming that they do not exist in the shared space. Such an alienating attitude towards culturally diverse members of the community is not conducive to building meaningful relations, jeopardizes social stability and in the case of too strong affiliation of differences by a minority can lead to uncontrolled aggression.

Some pupils in Polish schools pretend that all of their classmates are the same, which does not require their adopting a specific social attitude towards otherness. My research conducted in the Polish-Romani classes has showed that even with distinctly different cultural signs (dress code, language), teachers and students accepted that there were no differences between them, which was easier. As a consequence, no specific socio-educational needs resulting from the cul-

tural difference of the minority group were realized.⁹ A similar pattern of behaviour imposes social taboos on religious and ethnic discourse. The taboos surrounding the other / foreign cultural identities result in the closure of a minority group, which generates its isolation. This attitude of withdrawal is not negated, because it is difficult to see; passivity does not require verbal and non-verbal self-definition and does not send signals that need assessment.

It is easier to neutralize intolerance behaviours that have specific verbal and non-verbal identifiers. Expressing a view allows you to engage in a debate, using argumentation and scientific evidence as well as emotional persuasion, to resist such an attitude. Defining your views opens up opportunities for building relationships, no matter if this sometimes proves difficult. A thoughtful discourse coupled with rational interaction reduces the level of aggression and dislike. My studies conducted among high school students confirm that the most common source of intolerance is the fear of the unknown, of otherness, falling prey to negative stereotypes, i.e. ignorance or insufficient knowledge, unverified and uninformed about a given culture.

In theory, every attempt to expand this knowledge generates questions, initiates discussion, motivates people to modify their attitudes, and triggers a desire to know. In practice, as the most recent months have shown, the effectiveness of such actions is conditioned by the prevailing social atmosphere. A public consent to glorify nation-oriented and nationalist attitudes makes it no longer a shame to verbally and physically combat all cultural differences, and the discussion on this subject only exacerbates the situation as the friend or foe category begins to include also those who think differently.

It is a common belief that a tolerance-based attitude is enough to build a correct relationship at the intersection of cultures. The research I have conducted, however, has shown that tolerance is often accompanied by a lack of acceptance, which in some situations can lead to aggressive behaviour. The Others can be different as long as they do not inflate their difference and do not affiliate it. This greatly limits relationships and concentrates them on everyday living prob-

⁹ See the results of the studies carried out within the project „*Education for Integration*” – program of upgrading the level of language education of Roma children and young people financed by the European Union from the European Social Fund (PO KL 01.03.01-00-179/09): (Grzelak, Grzelak-Piaskowska).

lems. This attitude is reflected in unidirectional legal solutions and intercultural actions in Poland.

In a multicultural society, the most successful attitude is based on acceptance. This attitude is characterized not only by a tolerance for otherness, but also by the satisfaction with its existence, enhanced by an interest in it and the desire to know. Such a relation to otherness enables the building of meaningful relations, based on the exchange of cultural information, which shapes the bi-directionality of these relationships. In this way, knowledge is a factor binding the multicultural community.

Summary

A belief that only through assimilation can members of ethnic minorities become full-fledged citizens of a given country has been proved wrong. This process, because of its unidirectional character, i.e. members of ethnic minorities take over the language, norms and behaviour of the dominant society, without a corresponding adaptation on the part of that society, violates the principle of equality before the law of all nationals.

An integration policy, which, unlike assimilation, assumed that the process of mutual adjustment of the ethnic minority and the dominant society was bilateral, where both groups not only accepted the shared culture but also made their own contribution to it, albeit socially fair, intensifies interference and obliterates cultural differences, which can result in a loss of the cultural identity of the members of both the ethnic minority and the dominant society.

The idea of multiculturalism is not perfect, either. The assumption that people from different ethnic backgrounds benefit and learn from their different cultures while preserving a sense of their own cultural diversity and the awareness of their cultural heritage, is not a state-foundation assumption; it discriminates against ethnic minorities as it results in limiting their access to economic, social and educational goods developed by the state.

Bearing in mind the basic problems that impede intercultural communication in Poland:

- no widespread knowledge of minority cultures,
- no knowledge of minority languages and their legacy,

- the national / monocultural character of Polish education,
- lack of motivation to increase knowledge about minorities,
- a sense of guilt and grief generated by historical memory,
which result in the rise of conflict at the intersection of cultures, I propose a concept that helps to adopt a legal and social system combining the aforementioned solutions.

Assimilation processes should address the minimum requirements necessary to improve the functioning of ethnically diverse groups in the dominant society. Integration processes can help in cross-cultural education, enable communication technologies to be developed on the cultural frontiers and eliminate the "one's own / other" category, understood as the friend / foe opposition. Multiculturalism is, however, indispensable in the consolidation of the ethnic distinctiveness of groups that make up multicultural societies. Multiculturalism cannot, however, be understood as a mixture of ethnically diverse characters without the ability to identify them, and so multicultural societies should perceive their ethnic differences, know their origins and be able to semiotically interpret their messages. The requirement of providing education in this area rests with the state; therefore, modular school programs should take into account the cultural diversity of the students (Grzelak, Grzelak-Piaskowska). Proper education will modify the notion of a national community, emphasizing its cultural diversity as an added value, and will neutralize the behaviour conditioned by post-totalitarian memory. This is particularly important in the situation of growing cultural identity in Poland, observable for the past several months, generated by growing nationalist attitudes, which are increasingly broadly accepted.

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COMMAND OF THE POLISH LANGUAGE AND THE INTEGRATION OF THE ROMA IN POLAND: AN OUTLINE

The Roma community is considered to be the least educated, most neglected and misunderstood ethnic minority in Poland. According to the census data from 2011, out of 38.5 million Poles there are 17 thousand who identify themselves as Roma, of which 10 thousand declared that this was their only identity; 7 thousand combined it with their Polish identity (Central Statistical Office). However, the high mobility of the community and their reluctance to take part in surveys should be taken into account when reporting statistics related to the Roma community. In previous reports, taking into account the above considerations, it was pointed out that this group in Poland may number as many as tens of thousands (Ethnologue. Languages of the World).

The Roma minority in Poland – although the average Pole perceives it as monolithic – is in fact ethnically diverse. The four largest groups within the Republic of Poland are as follows: Polska Roma, Kelderasze, Lowarzy, and the Bergitka Roma, which differ in their social structure, customs, approach to the traditional Roma Code and, above all, the degree of integration with Poles (which depends, among others, on historical and cultural factors, such as non-Roma marriage bans). It seems that Polska Roma is the most conservative Roma ethnic group, which mainly inhabits the following voivodships:

Zachodniopomorskie, Kujawsko-Pomorskie, Wielkopolskie, and Lubuskie. Representatives of this ethnic group living in north-western Poland are much better off than the dominant population in southern Poland, the Carpathian Roma, which does not mean that the problem of high unemployment and poor education does not concern them. This is evidenced by the fact that at present in Wielkopolska there is only one person belonging to the Roma community with a tertiary education diploma¹. Interestingly, sociological research shows that, compared with other Central European countries, Poles show a dislike towards the Roma minority comparable to that of Hungarians, Bulgarians, Slovaks, and Romanians (based on data from 2016 – 67%). The Roma, besides the Arabs, are the most unpopular ethnic group in Poland (CBOS), but, unlike in the above countries, there are very few cases of Roma graduating from universities (Szoska-Różycka, Weigl). This demonstrates the low level of integration of the Roma community in Poland and the ineffective use of EU funds. For this reason, teachers in contact with Roma students can count on at best the incidental support of pedagogically savvy Roma assistants, and therefore the need for further education lies with school principals and the teachers themselves.

Although the Roma have lived among Poles for hundreds of years, they continue to remain „aliens and strangers” and their insistence to maintain exclusivity and cultural ethnocentrism makes their origin, history and customs unknown to the Polish public (Palczny). The evidently negative stereotype of the Roma and their acculturation problems throughout Central Europe do not improve the situation of those representatives of the community who decide to send their children to Polish schools or express the intention to educate their offspring beyond primary school. Contrary to popular opinion, there are a lot of such parents. A field study in the teaching environment indicates moreover that frequent and long trips abroad taken by Roma families adversely affect the education of the Roma in Poland. A question arises how – inasmuch as this is a matter of modifying the content of the curricula and the attitudes of the teaching profession rather than the characteristics of the social system – to encourage Roma parents to send children to Polish schools, which they often abandon for the sake of multicultural schools outside Poland.

¹ Based on the studies mentioned below.

The situation in which the Roma minority is inclined to educate their children, at least at the elementary level, makes one scrutinise school curricula and teacher competences and verify the extent to which teachers themselves are prepared to care for and educate children from a different culture, bilingual or monolingual at that. The common problems faced by Roma children in Polish schools include creating separate Roma-only classes, organizing extra-curricular activities exclusively for the Roma and sending them to special schools because of their poor command of the Polish language (Kwadrans 2008: 202)².

Following in the footsteps of Fredrik Barth and his typology of contemporary ethnic group status change, the strategy of the Roma minority in Poland should be defined as the most conservative (Barth). Roma culture is not subject to the „assimilation of the minority culture to the majority one” (Dołowy-Rybińska), which exposes this culture to exclusion and, as a consequence, full assimilation. Therefore, in the Roma minority, as in any culture at risk of disappearing, we observe an intensification of measures taken with a view to strengthen ethnic identity. This is even more difficult since small nations need an elite class capable of creating a national (ethnic) discourse that differs from the state one. Such a group would primarily have to engage in activities of a symbolic nature. The concept of the „Romani people”, promoted by the leaders of local Roma associations in Poland, is often in contradiction with the clan and ethnic divisions they propagate, which results in internal conflicts and stems from a growing sense of threat:

The Roma seek ethnic self-determination; however, as they are disadvantaged due to the lack of favourable conditions for cultivating their tradition and culture through education, these matters are primarily dealt with by associations and organizations. National identity usually emerges only among the Roma elites; it arises instead of pre-existing forms of ethnic awareness in the long-term process of cultural integration (Kwadrans 2004: 28).

In order to understand the specifics of contemporary Roma culture, it is worthwhile to trace its twentieth-century history (Mirga, Mróz). The trauma of the Polish Roma in the past century was not

² BBC journalist Hanna Szmunesówna, began a discussion on sending back Roma children to special schools in Poland. The footage was called „Some children are not fully white” (Szmunesówna).

only concerned with the Holocaust (Ficowski). A watershed moment was what began in 1964 (in the so-called „soft” version as early as the 1950s); it went by the name of productivisation and forced settlement, which forced a part of the Roma community to abandon their traditional traveling lifestyle, which destroyed their internal economic system based on nomadic service provision. Data from the Polish population and household census of 2002, however, plainly demonstrate that the abandonment by Roma of a life „on the road” had not improved their living conditions and social status. Still only ca. 10% of Roma living in Poland have paid work and regularly pay taxes (Klima, Paszko).

The “Education for Integration” project was carried out at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań in the years 2010–2012. The program was to improve the language command of Roma children and young people. It involved two stages. The first phase included a research study among the Roma. It was conducted in the form of tests and written questionnaires, oral interviews, as well as participatory observations of 1,500 Roma minority representatives. Participants in the study declared that they belonged to the following Roma groups: Polska Roma (76%), Lowarowie (21%), Kelderasze (1.5%), and Sinti (0.5%).

The interviewers were provided with a conversation scenario and a language test for children and adults, on the basis of which they asked questions about the level of command of the Polish language, knowledge of culture and the socialization aspect related to education.

School-related questions asked about the degree of satisfaction connected with attending school, potential problems with peers and pedagogical staff, and – if the child did not attend school – the reasons for absenteeism and the child’s attitude to school education, possible cultural interference that could affect the child’s dissatisfaction in the school context, and the degree of integration with non-Roma students. In the case of parents and grandparents of pre-school and school children, the questions asked concerned the following: parents’ motivation for enrolling the child in a school-based education as well as their own negative school experiences (with particular emphasis on ethnic discrimination) and their impact on the above motivation. Parents of school age children were asked about the level of involvement in the education of their children and in school life, the level of security related to their child being at school, cultural interferences leading to

discrepancies between school and the home environment. Other questions concerned expected changes regarding the organization of school work and the form and content of the knowledge transferred and the level of motivation for educating children beyond primary school.

The questionnaires, moreover, sought information on the history of the Roma minority, with particular emphasis on the cultural determinants of negative attitudes toward institutional education and a positive approach to education in terms of adaptation to traditional roles in Roma society (organization and course of education before the mass forced resettlement of the Roma). Other questionnaire items related to cultural rituals of the Roma minority to be factored in in the process of educating Roma children, taboos, the organization of the Roma society (especially the role of elders), basic cultural prohibitions, choice of specific professions, acquisition of knowledge in specific fields, and information concerning conflicts between Roma ethnic groups.

The results of the study allowed us to formulate the following conclusions: generations born in the 1930s, 40s and 50s are almost 100% illiterate. Their institutional education was either erratic or nonexistent. Talking about their life on the road, the Roma stress that they went to school only in winter, when the wagons left the „forests” and the people moved to periodically rented apartments. They longingly remember the times when „they went to school dressed the Roma way” and the lessons consisted primarily in learning Polish. The respondents are of the opinion that today’s Roma youth and children are „well educated”, which leads us to conclude that the command of the Polish language is a yardstick of education for the oldest generation of the Roma.

Generations born in the 1960s, 70s and 80s are to a large extent (45%) generations of secondary illiterates. They have bad memories from school and mostly attended it for 2-3 years. Their school experience is definitely negative. They saw education as yet another act of oppression by state institutions, after forced settlement. Representatives of generations of today’s 50-, 40- and 30-year-olds have repeatedly experienced discrimination on the part of teachers and educators, their peers and their parents. The communist assimilation policy led to a belief that school is an institution that can strip one of their Roma identity; therefore, one has to leave it after acquiring the basic skills of reading, writing and arithmetic.

The generation born in the late 1980s and 1990s is a generation struggling with the consequences of systemic transformation. The education of this age cohort was influenced primarily by the opening up of Poland's national borders and access to social welfare in Western countries. The Roma, forced over the years to settle down, in the 1980s and 1990s, when the geopolitical reality allowed them to, began to migrate, primarily to Germany, Sweden, the United Kingdom, the United States, and Canada. In some regions of Poland, the rapidly growing Roma community was affected by the social mechanism of the „scapegoat”, which led to pogroms in Konin and Oświęcim (1981) and Mława (1991). At the same time, the stereotype of a Roma as a thief, scammer and exploiter resurfaced. To avoid such stigmatization of Roma children, inimical to intercultural education, given the income of their parents, it is important to point out that the communist system, which ordered the Roma to settle down, totally disrupted their traditional economic system. As a settled community, the Roma lost the main source of income, i.e. itinerant trade. Like most of the societies lagging behind in the modernization process, they have also suffered from the consequences of industrialization and globalization, which made their work – craftsmanship of products such as boilers, horseshoes and frying pans – dispensable in the general public. Although they attempted to „modernize” their traditional professions, replacing horses by cars and fabrics by second-hand clothes, in the first years of operation of market economy in Poland it turned out that the Roma community in communist Poland made a living primarily working in state enterprises (e.g. Nowa Huta ironworks) and receiving social welfare. After the transformation of the political and economic system, a large part of the Roma was in a difficult financial situation, which forced them, just like many of their non-Roma compatriots, to seek better living conditions outside Poland.

As a result of the frequent trips abroad of the Roma in search of work and a social paradise, another generation of secondary illiterates (67%) emerged, today in their twenties. What is new, as compared to older generations, is their multi-lingual illiteracy: they neither read nor write, do not speak properly any language other than the Romani, but they are often able to communicate in three or four languages (depending on their travel destinations). A reluctance to acquire formal education, instilled in their parents by the communist school system, prevented parents from taking care of their children receiving

basic education in one of the languages of the literary culture. Most of them have gone to school periodically, at the time when their parents were staying in Poland. A large part of them are openly dissatisfied with the erratic course of their education, which inspires hope that this generation of their children will be the first Roma generation in Poland to obtain at least primary school education.

The tests and interviews conducted were also aimed at determining the level of command of the Polish language among the Roma groups studied. Based on the analyses carried out, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. There is no way to conduct surveys concerning the level of trust of children and adults in educational institutions by means of a questionnaire. Only in-depth interviews can provide information on the examples of discrimination against Roma children in schools. The completed questionnaires show the full satisfaction of Roma children and parents with the functioning of the schools. The interviews show that at the moment children and parents do not encounter any unwillingness on the part of teachers and administrators, but rather indicate discriminatory behaviour of other children, not countered by an appropriate response of the educators. A burning issue is the educators' inability to respond; despite their good intentions, they are unable to create in classroom environments an atmosphere conducive to integration. It seems that the way to solve this problem is primarily to increase teachers' knowledge of Roma culture and the attendant constraints. Adult Roma mention mostly a lack of understanding for cultural differences as the reasons for their reluctance to Polish educational institutions. A recurrent problem was that girls cannot use shared locker rooms before Physical Education classes, wear shorts or trousers, be on duty in toilets. There is an additional issue, calling for a wider public debate, for further education received by girls. The interviewees noted that most parents of school-age girls want them only to complete primary school. This reluctance of the daughters to take up further education results from, among other factors, the still common problem of so-called Roma abductions, to which adolescent girls are subjected. In such situations, parents and employees of Roma NGOs used to apply for individual teaching for the girls, whose requests would not always gain the understanding and acceptance of educators. A similar problem concerns school trips: Roma children do not participate in them, not only for financial reasons but also because

their parents are concerned that during the trip there might be circumstances prohibited by the Romani cultural code. Another problem is the public discussion during Biology lessons of topics related to human anatomy and physiology. In addition to the necessary training of teachers in the field of Roma culture and intercultural communication, there must be a will to discuss and present the relevant issues during lessons with class tutors and extracurricular activities.

2. In the language section of the survey, containing multiple-choice questions, the overall score indicates the level of writing and reading as A1-A2 (89%), while the open or non-open answers show a blatant disparity between speaking and comprehension skills (75% – B1-B2) and writing and reading. The majority of adult Roma's writings is on the verge of dysgraphia.

3. Questions in the field of cultural studies were not difficult for the respondents, which confirms the view expressed in the literature on the subject that Polska Roma is a culturally well-integrated and the most conservative Roma group.

4. In the Romani language there are no style variations, which affects the inability to use style differences in the Polish language, especially the official style. It seems that glottodidactic exercises conducted with Roma children and young people should primarily concern these issues.

5. Moreover, linguistic etiquette requires numerous glottodidactic corrections. Roma children come to Polish schools with a negligible command of Polish, limited to constructions and vocabulary necessary to communicate with their peers. That is why they often cannot linguistically cope in the official communication situation with a teacher or other educator.

6. The results of the research show that the Roma are still not positively perceived in schools, although the stereotypical perception of the Roma minority students is gradually on the wane and is actually limited solely to peer groups. It is disturbing to recognize the signals testifying to a lack of acceptance of the cultural rules that are part of the Roma cultural code.

It is a platitude to observe that the Polish education system differs from the systems of multi-ethnic societies. It is much more difficult to formulate a constructive solution to this problem, given the local ethnic and national proportions. Out of 38.5 million Poles, approx. 597,000 represent national and ethnic minorities, accounting for 1.5%

of the total population. There are two initiatives to tackle the discrimination of the Roma on the Polish labour market and in education: local and EU projects. In 2003, the Polish Government adopted a resolution establishing a multiannual Program for the Roma Community, coordinated by the Ministry of Interior and Administration. A Joint Commission of the Government and National Ethnic Minorities, affiliated at the above Ministry, is the coordinating body subsidizing minority organizations (approximately € 4 million allocated for this purpose in 2017). Since 2007, Poland has taken advantage of EU programs, one of which is dedicated to the employment and social integration of the Roma. In the years 2007–2013, the Human Capital Operational Program amounted to EUR 22 million (including the contribution of the state at the level of 3.3 million), in the years 2014–2020 – within the framework of the Knowledge Education Development Program – PLN 20 million (EUR 5 million).

The issue of Roma discrimination is constantly monitored by sociological research, but because of constitutional provisions, the data on the number of Roma children attending school in Poland are not complete. Although the assumptions of the Roma Community Program carried out by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Administration indicate that 70% of Polish Roma children are in regular education (Interior Ministry), information provided by school superintendents shows that there is a disproportion between the number of children at the schooling age and those who actually go to school. This is confirmed by the results of the research study conducted at the Adam Mickiewicz University. According to them, 33% of Roma children fulfil their compulsory schooling obligation in Poland, 46% of the children go to school in their country of residence and 21% of the children do not attend compulsory education at all. The unwillingness of the Roma towards the educational system does not undermine one of the important hypotheses of negligible interest in education:

Educational systems are still unprepared to work in the context of cultural uniqueness of Roma children, who often have problems understanding the language used in the classroom. As a result, many Roma end their education in elementary schools, oftentimes in special schools (Kwadrans 2004: 16).

One of the reasons for this is the poor command of the Polish language among the Roma. The conclusions drawn from the interviews conducted among members of the Roma community confirm the

view that pre-school and school children often do not know the Polish language.

The problem – as it seems – is also the improper methodological preparation of teachers providing education in the first years of primary school, above all Polish language teachers. Polish higher education institutions do not offer courses in language teaching methodologies for conducting classes for bilinguals or members of ethnic minorities. Teachers consciously or unconsciously discriminate against their Roma students because of their cultural differences and unwillingness to adapt to some common rules present in Polish schools. Roma children are commonly perceived as causing „educational problems”. The program introduced in the Czech Republic and Slovakia, introducing the so-called Roma assistants, supposed to be „cultural translators” for teachers and pupils in the education process, has not always proved successful in Poland. Since Roma assistants are recruited from the Roma community, their presence in the school classroom assures both the Roma students and their parents that no violation of the cultural code will take place.

Although there are many valuable texts about the culture and history of the Roma in Poland, specialist teaching aids allowing teachers to teach Polish to Roma students have not yet been created. Teachers themselves point out deficiencies in their preparation but do not have a chance to receive adequate relevant assistance. It should be emphasized that for Roma children, teachers are the main and often the only source of knowledge about Polish language and culture. This professional group has a major impact on the degree of command of the Polish language among members of the Roma minority.

In 2011 and 2012, the second phase of the study was carried out at AMU. This time the research addressed a group of 150 teachers and other employees of educational institutions dealing with members of the Roma community. They were Polish language and elementary education teachers, school principals, educators, psychologists, tutors of day-care centres, and other teachers (of foreign languages or history). All of them took part in training programmes held at the AMU Faculty of Polish and Classical Philology concerning the education of Roma children and young people. The study included consultations, interviews, surveys, and observations in schools.

About 85% of the teachers had very little knowledge of Roma culture and did not know the rules of the Roma Code which could have

an impact on school communication. For example, many of them believed that problems with physical education were due to the students' laziness or aversion to sport. Another problem was the lack of awareness of the high level of illiteracy among the Roma. Teachers attempted to communicate with the parents through comments in the students' logs or penalized the students for a lack of written excuses from their parents.

95% of the teachers did not have any knowledge of the theory or practice of teaching Polish as a foreign language. The educators did not know how to lead supplementary classes with children and how to test the children's language command.

45% of the teachers were unaware of the Roma children's bilingualism. Some teachers were unaware that in their home environment the Roma use the Romani language and that, therefore, the child who starts school may not know the Polish language or may know it insufficiently. Many teachers put down the poor communication skills of their students to their low intelligence or even developmental impairments.

Most of the teachers did not have intercultural communication competences, i.e. they had never attended intercultural training programmes and were not aware of the problems or risks of communication in multicultural groups. The respondents observed that they were unable to talk to the students' parents, did not know how to communicate with the child who did not understand them and could not resolve ethnic conflicts.

The conclusions arising from the tests and interviews make it possible to formulate a demand for awareness-raising campaigns targeting Roma parents, showing them the importance of education beyond the child's being able to read and write. In addition, it seems that the non-adaptation of the Polish education system to the conditions of a multicultural society makes Romani parents send their children to schools abroad. Hopefully, raising educators' awareness will have a positive impact on the level of education of Roma children and young people.

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MICROHISTORIES OF GERMAN-SPEAKING RESIDENTS OF THE POZNAŃ PROVINCE VS. GEOPOLITICS

Elżbieta Rybicka follows in footsteps of Edward Said, observing that there is no innocent cultural and literary discourse about space, because „it asks us more and more questions about place politics, ideological appropriation, symbolic violence of cultural maps, even of private territories” and concludes that „geopoetics cannot be separated from geopolitics” (Rybicka 42). She notes the shift of focus from the poetics of space to its politics, from ontology to ideology. She stresses that in this context, frontiers and multicultural hybrids are especially intriguing, which does not mean „re-discovering the world, but above all a greater sensitivity to the spatial positioning of culture, history, individual, and communities” (Rybicka 42).

The Grand Duchy of Poznań¹ was created by the decisions of the Vienna Congress. Its establishment did not take into account all

¹ Since its founding, the Grand Duchy of Poznań has been an integral part of the Prussian state, but in contrast to the neighbouring Duchy of Pomerania and the Duchy of Silesia, it had a higher rank. After 1848, the name was replaced by the official Province of Poznań. In the period of tightening the policy towards Poles, the term ‘Ostmark’ [Eastern March], derived from the terminology of the Middle Ages, appears to remind us of the historical struggle for laying claim to the eastern frontiers. Until 1935, the term ‘Ostmark’ was used precisely in the context of struggle [Gerke 28–29]. This is shown, among other things, by the tendentious and politicized literature of the Eastern March [*Ostmarkenlitera-*

the geographical and historical conditions, and the boundaries of the Prussia-annexed territory did not fully correspond with the historical boundaries of the region of Wielkopolska (Serrier 262), which justifies considerations concerning geopolitics. The Province of Poznań is thus an area defined in administrative and geopolitical terms, subject of the settlement policy, first of the Prussian government, and after the unification of Germany in 1871, of the German one. Contrary to expectations, this settlement policy did not produce the desired effects and did not permanently strengthen the German element here.

German settlement activity was supported in Wielkopolska in various ways², including legislative action (Kulturkampf, the formation of the Colonization Commission, Prussian expulsions, educational laws). Prussian officials and teachers, in turn, were supposed not only to execute the authorities' policies in the field³, but to be animators of public life. Martin Broszat writes about the German population's settling this area as „officials”, especially in large cities. The author observes that „this artificial introduction of the Germanic element in this province was little suitable for the permanent restoration of Prussian-German rule” (Broszat 197). However, some of the public servants, teachers and lecturers saw themselves as promoters of the Germanic element [Träger des Deutschtums]. Their efforts were complemented by activists of local associations, editors of regional journals and authors of the *Heimatliteratur*, giving fictitious accounts of a wonderful life in the German Eastern Borderlands. For the same reason, a comprehensive cultural policy was implemented. It targeted the German population, which was to be more closely associated with what was commonly perceived as a rather unattractive region. It was hoped that the feeling of alienation would be resolved, one of the reasons for the demographic disadvantage for Germans. First, their

tur]. See also E. Polczyńska, „Im polnischen Wind”. *Beiträge zum deutschen Zeitungswesen, Theaterleben und zur deutschen Literatur im Grossherzogtum Posen 1815–1918*. Poznań 1988; M. Wojtczak, „Ostmarkenliteratur”. *Prowincja Poznańska w literaturze niemieckiej lat 1890–1918*. Poznań 2001.

² The history of German settlement in Wielkopolska harks back at least to the 13th century. It never reached such proportions and importance as in the neighbouring regions.

³ Officials were granted settlement allowances and other subsidies, and the service in the Borderlands was counted as if the time spent here was a time of war (Broszat 172).

demographics were lower than for the Poles, and second: migration at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries was meagre (Broszat 191–192).

The process of arduous construction and strengthening of the identification of German inhabitants with the region was to be additionally supported by a proper historical narrative, “treating memory in an instrumental way in order to defend an interpretation of past events which [...] undermines other interpretations” (Kapralski 20). Therefore, any measures aimed at developing this part of the Eastern March and documenting the Prussian and German presence in this area were demonstrated and perpetuated in the most varied manner, according to the determinants of historical policy. Anniversaries were celebrated, monuments unveiled, memorial days celebrated assigned and given the appropriate meaning. General-interest texts were published and *Ostmarkenliteratur* disseminated⁴. In this way, thanks to the various media, the desired content became an element of collective memory. One of the pillars of the idea of German settlement in this region was the popularization of the myth of the „German East” (Hahn 386). The state was to establish its domination here and establish collective memory on this myth⁵. The method applied for this purpose was shifting the focus from the history of events to their perception and interpretation.

It is therefore worthwhile to focus on microhistory, a case study⁶, and – on the basis of the autobiographies of German-speaking writers who, from 1815 to 1918, lived in the Province of Poznań for some time – to answer how the authorities’ activities signalled at the outset were received by the migrants. Another question to be addressed is whether or not in their personal reflections these migrants identify with the political agenda implemented by the authorities.

Thus, apart from the history of events, another issue is „what really happened” (Karp, Traba 8), and how the authors assessed the poli-

⁴ The protagonists of novels from the so-called Literature of the Eastern March series are German settlers, so-called *Kulturträger* and pioneers of the Germanic element. The purpose of this literature is, among others, to disseminate arguments in favour of the German presence in the Poznań region.

⁵ Popularization of the myth can be seen as an example of legitimising new things by ‘inventing’ their traditions. This follows the principle that if one can prove that a fact or process has roots in the past, it is for the better (Kapralski 22).

⁶ On the meaning of studies on microhistory and studies or experience (see Karp, Traba 7–22).

tics taking place before their eyes, how they experienced the actions of the state, how they remembered them, and how they wrote about them (Assmann 16). Such comparisons indicate the coexistence of actual, experienced and memorized factual history, which highlights the difference between the subjective space of the authors, the objective space of their real life and the space of science, defined by the researchers of a given field (Ungern-Sternberg 879).

Julie Burow (1806–1857), Ludwig Kalisch (1814–1882), Otto Roquette (1824–1896), Adelheid Sturm (1840–1911), Clara Viebig (1860–1952), Albert Steuer (1874–1967), Ernst Toller (1893–1939), Alfred Cohn (1901–1961), Kurt Ihlenfeld (1901–1972), and A. E. Johann (actually Alfred Ernst Johann Wollschläger, 1901–1996)⁷ are representatives of individual and collective memory of a certain temporally, spatially and to a large extent socially homogeneous group. Therefore, based on their autobiographical texts, the issue of their subjective reception of the geopolitical space inhabited by them will be discussed below. Since they are a relatively homogeneous professional group (they are mostly children of officials and teachers, plus one Protestant clergyman, one Catholic priest, and two authors of Jewish descent from merchant families), they are therefore not representative of all Germans living here between 1815 and 1918. Thus, they represent one of the many „truths” of the past (Karp, Traba 20). However, due to the high degree of the „official capacity” of German urban societies, the autobiographical texts under scrutiny deserve all the more attention, since they help to demonstrate the extent to which the individualized memory of the authors, representatives of this particular group⁸, complements the political and national memory⁹ about the Province of Poznań as „an an-

⁷ Although the saturation of individual autobiographies with regional content varies and the setting of the texts includes locations outside the Province of Poznań, the autobiographical texts identified will be considered exclusively in the Poznań context.

⁸ Due to the profession of their parents, officials or teachers, the authors are children of representatives of the authorities in the field (e.g. O. Roquette, A. Sturm, A. E. Johann).

⁹ According to A. Assmann, wherever history is used to build identity, where it is taken over by citizens, and treated as instrumental by politicians, one can talk about political or national memory. Unlike the polyphony of grassroots social memory, encompassing communications and cultural memory, which passes away with the passing of successive generations, political/national memory is more homogeneous, strongly embedded in political institutions, oriented towards survival, with a top-down impact on society (Assmann 37). It is intended to serve as a foundation of local identity, „assembled” for the immediate needs of ideologists.

cient German country". It moreover helps to establish whether or not, or to what extent these autobiography authors distance themselves from the historical policy propagating the myth of the „German East”.

Perception of both myths examined on the basis of relevant literature shows that the individual perception of geopolitical space does not have to be identical with its ideological appropriation, a result of the current political interests of the authorities. It is abundantly clear that the earlier the autobiographies authors were born – their lives coincided with the onset of the administrative unit called the Grand Duchy of Poznań – the more critical they are of the time spent here. From the perspective of those born before 1840/50, the Grand Duchy of Poznań is usually treated as a periphery of Prussia. As we know, this does not fit the vision, supported by ideological propaganda, of work in the Eastern March as, in a sense, a „promised land”. Otto Roquette, who spent the period from 1824 to 1839 here, recalls:

It was common to complain about this hopeless area (around Gniezno – E.N.), about unpleasant walks in the deep sand, without shade, because there was not a single tree around; there was nothing beautiful to look at. [...]. The authors of bibliographies were unanimous that staying here was something terrible, because almost everyone had seen a piece of the great world before¹⁰.

Another common denominator of the texts is that the authors are relatively circumspect when recalling in the memoirs their stay in the Province of Poznań, which may mean that the authors reluctantly yield to the broader context of historical events. Because if they almost skip this time period, we can assume that they are more concerned with other matters, subjectively more important, such as those related to their private inner space, rather than to the geopolitical one. The space of territorial expansion is often only the outer layer, so most treat it as marginal¹¹. There are also authors, like Ernst Toller, who imply that the Germans „considered themselves” (which indicates that this need not necessarily be true) „to be indigenous peoples

¹⁰ „Allgemein war die Klage über die trostlose Oede der Gegend [um Gnesen – E.N.], über das schlechte Spaziergehen im tiefen Sande, die Schattenlosigkeit, da kein Baum ringsum zu sehen war, der Mangel an jeglichem Reiz, auf dem das Auge hätte ausruhen können. [...] Man war einig, daß dies eigentlich ein schrecklicher Aufenthalt sei, denn fast Alle hatten die Welt in größeren Kreisen gesehn” (Roquette 43–44).

¹¹ It is also possible to admit that there may be authors who treat the political appropriation of the region as something unquestionable and thus do not refer to this issue at all.

and real lords of this country" (Toller 2). In turn, Adelheid Sturm claims that „it was not really German territory" (Sturm 4).

Restraint as to the political dimension of work and life in Poznań may also mean ignoring the government's colonial policy and everything that is directly or indirectly linked to it. Moreover, it is impossible to exclude that autobiography authors turn on unique self-censorship for patriotic reasons, because most probably they were not supposed to write critically about the Prussian / German presence in the former Wielkopolska. It was easier to ignore it and to limit it to general patterns and not to run any risks (Tazbir 16–17). After all we know that the writing of memories is directed at the recipient, hence the authors select the information and choose solutions to make the narrative more palatable. Texts written with a view to being published, their content made public, are written differently than those meant exclusively for the author.

In most cases (with the exception of A. E. Johann, C. Viebig, E. Toller), writers are not involved in political debate as they marginalise politics. For this reason, the question of whether there must be a large gap between the official current of memory and the individual perspective will remain without a conclusive answer. Its existence is indisputable as evidenced by, among others, the attitude of C. Viebig. Although the writer seems to have avoided taking a position against the official narrative, she is not silent but hides behind her own fiction¹². Her commentaries about her own novel *Das schlafende Heer* (1904) are a pretext for discussing the Polish-German neighbourly relations in the Poznań region, with politics hovering in the background. Although *Ostmarkenliteratur* is considered to be an important medium popularizing the position of the German authorities in redefining the historical image of the region, in the novel, despite being classified as *Ostmarkenliteratur*, C. Viebig criticizes the actions taken by the authorities and points to their low effectiveness. This is important information, showing the weaknesses of the one-dimensional policy of the German Empire against the Poles. Biographical memory says in this case what social memory is not yet ready to talk about.

During my stay there, the Polish issue was gaining interest in German politics. At the time, I did not yet think about writing, nor was I aware that I inhaled that

¹² C. Viebig makes use of an intertextual measure called in studies of collective memory a "remembrance of literature", or a recall of literature within literature (see Lachmann) (see Neumann 149–178).

atmosphere, whose breath is recognisable in my novel (*Das schlafende Heer – E.N.*), an atmosphere full of political, economic and religious conflict ... which led to the painful loss of not only the Province of Poznań but also of a large part of Upper Silesia¹³.

C. Viebig further emphasizes:

Without taking sides, I clearly showed how social unrest was fuelled, how difficult it was to relieve the Poles' dissatisfaction, what banal mistakes, contrary to political principles and humanity, were committed by the Germans¹⁴.

The confrontation policy, in the opinion of the author, gave rise to the Poles' uncompromising aspiration to regain independence.

She talked about that day, where as a young woman she stood by the window and watched the wheelbarrows and carts transporting from the village of Buk to Poznań unfortunate soldiers. Their noses and ears cut off with knives of fanatical Polish women, their hands and legs broken, their bodies covered with blood. And this was the time when the Polish revolution grew before me. I heard the hammering of scythes and saw their broad glow assume the colour of blood during the death harvest. I saw a white falcon in flight on a red symbol fly and heard the mad scream of the crowd:

'Poland has not perished yet -
Long live Poland!'"¹⁵.

¹³ „Während ich dort war, erregte die polnische Frage großes Aufsehen in der deutschen Politik. Ohne dass es mir bewusst war, denn ich dachte noch nicht daran zu schreiben, saugte ich mich voll mit dieser Atmosphäre, deren Atem sich durch meinen Roman [*Das schlafende Heer – E. N.*] hindurchspüren lässt, eine Atmosphäre voller politischer, wirtschaftlicher und religiöser Konflikte [...], die zu dem schmerzlichen Verlust nicht nur der Provinz Posen geführt haben, sondern auch eines guten Teils von Oberschlesien“ (Viebig 92).

¹⁴ “Ohne Partei zu ergreifen, habe ich am hellen Tag gezeigt, wie man schürte, wie man es verhinderte, die Unzufriedenheit der Polen zu löschen, welche Fehler, zu leicht zu verstehen, die Deutschen gegen die politischen Prinzipien und die Menschlichkeit begingen“ (Viebig 92).

¹⁵ “Und wenn sie dann von jenem Tage sprach, an dem sie, als junge Frau am Fenster stehend, zusah, wie drunten auf Karren und Leiterwagen die unglücklichen Soldaten vom Dorfe Buk her in die Stadt Posen gebracht wurden, mit abgeschnittenen Nasen und Ohren, verstümmelten Armen und Beinen, halb verblutet unter den Messern fanatischer Weiber, dann wuchs die polnische Revolution gewaltig vor mir auf. Ich hörte das Dengeln der Sensen, ich sah deren breites, blitzendes Blank sich blutig färben unterm Mähen der Sensenmänner, ich sah den weißen Falken fliegen auf rotem Panier und hörte das wahnwitzige Gebrüll der Menge:

'Noch ist Polen nicht verloren -
Niech żyje Polska!'" (Viebig 48).

In further considerations, it is impossible to ignore another important factor influencing the content and shape of memories. They always crystallize in the present perspective. What is meaningful and justified at present is remembered (Degen 80), because today determines individual and social remembrance, which does not come from the past but from the present (Baumgartner)¹⁶. A specific moment in which one remembers affects the thematic and emotional focus. Therefore, analyzing the autobiographical content with the time taken to write them¹⁷ down and answering questions about the moment of history and the moment of the author's life when they arise, is by all means reasonable, perhaps even necessary, to better understand the possible causes of the selection of the motifs and the way of conducting autobiographical narratives¹⁸.

Taking into account another determinant, i.e. the time lapse between the events described and the moment of remembrance, it can be seen that in two cases it is even sixty years. This must affect the „remembrance of the past” and be instrumental for the differences arising from the situational context of the autobiography and the contextual situation of the life of an autobiography author (Karp, Traba 20). So, the time lapse between actual experience and narration about it determines memory. Apparently, this effect can be seen in A. E. Johann, who discusses at length the political change in Europe and in the world and regards the Poles' longing for their own independent state as justified. He also understands well the inevitability of political change.

In the German East (...) in the Prussian Province of Poznań, earlier known as Wielkopolska, and in Upper Silesia Poles wake up. Their comprehensible longing for their own state between Germany and Russia did not expire throughout the 125 years of statelessness¹⁹.

¹⁶ Marian Golka writes about „tendencies” and „reconciliation of the past with the present” (Golka 52).

¹⁷ The years of life of the autobiographies authors span the period from 1806 (the year of Julia Burow's birth) to 1996 (the year of A. E. Johann's death). The first autobiography came out in 1857 (J. Burow), the last one in 1989 (A. E. Johann). Four books came out after their authors died (A. Sturm, C. Viebig, A. Cohn, A. Steuer).

¹⁸ On the factors and patterns of individual forgetting (Golka 51-52).

¹⁹ „Im deutschen Osten [...] regten sich in der preußischen Provinz Posen, dem früheren Großpolen, und in Oberschlesien die Polen, deren sehr verständliche Sehnsucht nach einem eigenen Staat zwischen Deutschland und Rußland an den rund 125 Jahren ihrer Staatenlosigkeit nie erloschen war” (Johann 190).

A. E. Johann and C. Viebig, referring to the term „der deutsche Osten“, allude to the myth of the „German East.“ It is worth asking here whether this is enough evidence of subordination to the ruling ideologies and their reinterpretation of history. To some extent this is perhaps true, when years later, as a consequence of the loss of this part of the Eastern March, C. Viebig presented the now former Province of Poznań as an agricultural basket of Germany. The author of a memorable commemorative text published on July 17, 1930 in *Wiesbadener*²⁰ *Tageblatt*, writes about the „German East“ as a lost paradise, when „those endless wheat fields – full granaries of Prussia – fell prey to the Poles“²¹.

At the same time, however, he continues to write about the monotonous and poor country in which, like Adelheid Sturm, there are only pines. He moreover draws contrasting comparisons between Rhineland and the Province of Poznań; the former definitely prevails.

I was born in the West, in the most beautiful corner of Rhineland, on the gentle Moselle with its vine slopes; the merry sun smiles at them from the dark blue sky. Thus, this infinite land without mountains and without diversification seemed boring to me. Cereals, beet fields, potatoes, and again potato fields, beets, cereals – oats, barley, rye and wheat, wheat – wherever I looked, everywhere in the sunshine there was the same wheat. Almost out of fear I cried out: Am I supposed to stay here?²².

²⁰ Autobiographic writings by C. Viebig originated in different periods of her life and were published correspondingly (1914, 1925, 1926, 1927, 1929, 1930, 1931) in various sources, such as: *Berliner Tageblatt*, *Kürschners Bücherschatz* (Ed. H. Hilger), *St. Galler Tagblatt*, *Räder*, *Kölnische Illustrierte Zeitung*, *Wiesbadener Tageblatt*, *Uhu – Das Ullstein Magazin*, *Die Literatur*, *Deutsche Presse*, *Monatszeitschrift für Freunde des Buches*, *Eifelkalender*, *8 Uhr-Blatt*, and *Der Gesellige*. An anthology with autobiographical texts (*Clara Viebig. Mein Leben. Autobiographische Skizzen*. Ed. Ch. Aretz, Hontheim 2002) comes out on the 50th Anniversary of the writer's death and contains earlier unpublished notes. The perspective is enriched on an ongoing basis with successive events.

²¹ Als „jene unendlichen Weizenbreiten – volle Kornkammern Preußens – den Polen anheimfielen“ (Viebig 79).

²² „Mir, der im Westen, im schönsten Winkel der Rheinprovinz geborenen, an der sanften Mosel mit den Rebenbergen über denen eine heitere Sonne von tiefblauen Himmel lächelt, zu Hause, kam diese unabsehbare Weite, ohne Berge, ohne Abwechslung, öde vor. Kornbreiten, Rübenäcker, Kartoffelfelder, und wieder Kartoffelfelder, Rübenäcker, Kornbreiten – Hafer, Gerste, Roggen und Weizen, Weizen – wohin ich sah, immer das gleiche Wogen im Sonnenbrand. [...]. Fast angstvoll rief aus: Hier soll ich belieben?“ (Viebig 124).

Still, the monotony of Poznań has an idyllic charm (ca. 1920) in the eyes of the writer:

And yet, how beautiful this flat landscape is! Estates lie in the sea of fields like islands, like enclosed kingdoms, each owner being its king²³.

This is also the mood of many other descriptive excerpts:

My great love for country life, for the land, for the infinite space where our bread grows was born there. The horizons without borders, the tree alleys that seem blue from a distance, the calm ponds surrounded by bushes, where a ponderous lily floats on the dark water. The country of my fathers, lost, but unforgettable!²⁴

In turn, A. E. Johann addresses the question of the change of the statehood of the German frontier territory, both indirectly, referring to the feelings of his father, a Prussian official who had deeply felt the loss of the Eastern March, and directly. From a personal point of view, he compares the event to the fall of the British Empire and from a perspective of several decades (*Dies wilde Jahrhundert* comes out in 1989) concludes that no political power is permanent and sooner or later each will fall. The rational nature of his autobiographical commentary from the 1980s, especially about the 1918/20 major historical transformations, clearly indicates the influence of temporal distance on the narrative of the experience of many years. The emotions and the tension that accompany every human being on the paths of life are nearly completely left out by A. E. Johann in his text. What he proposes to the reader is the transmission of turbulent events narrated by the narrator, who takes up the attitude of a witness (Czermińska 19–24), and at the moment of the autobiographical account knows the end of this story (Gusdorf 137). He therefore decides on a sober, emotionless approach and emphasizes only what at the moment of remembering seems to be most important from a factual point of view. It is clear that different experiences do not have the same im-

²³ „Und doch, know schön ist auch dieses flache Land! Inseln gleich liegen die Gutshöfe im Meer der Felder, abgeschlossene Reiche für sich, jeder Gutsherr ein König“ (Viebig 135).

²⁴ „Es ist dort, dass mir meine große Liebe zum Landleben kam, zur Erde, zu den unendlichen Räumen, wo unser Brot wächst. Horizonte ohne Grenzen, Linien von Bäumen, die in der Ferne blau werden, ruhige Teiche von Büschen umgeben, wo auf dem schwarzen Wasser, nachdenklich die weiße Blüte der Seerose schwimmt. Land meiner Väter, verlorenes Land, aber niemals vergessen!“ (Viebig 91).

portance in memory. Memory divides them into those less and more valuable, and only later is the specific meaning assigned to them (Baumgartner).

However, if this particular example does not sufficiently demonstrate that the passage of time, changing the perspective of seeing the problem, can effectively suppress the emotions, the distanced and reflective voice of A. E. Johann is probably due to the fact that ideological persuasion could be so tiresome and unacceptable in the version served by the authorities; many could actually be fed up with it. A. E. Johann knows from experience that dogmas do not stand the test of time (Johann 349). For him, the need for the „emperor and the masses“ had completely disappeared (Johann 196), and he no longer cares about politics after the First World War because the world he had grown up in (Imperial Germany) had collapsed. Although he knows a lot about the political changes taking place in Germany, Europe and the world in the twentieth century, he eventually decides to be an observer and a commentator rather than a political activist because, as he writes,

Politics is always ungrateful. As far as possible, I limit myself to private and purely human matters. Here you can still find at least a bit of sense and decency²⁵.

Pastor Kurt Ihlenfeld (1901–1972) draws attention to the political determinants and specificities of borderlands and states whose borders are weird and confusing. You have to live in the frontier area to understand the determinism of the processes taking place there (Ihlenfeld 24). K. Ihlenfeld compares the borderland to a person who, within thirty years, has changed his name four times. He writes that such a man would be locked up either in a madhouse or in jail, then concludes that there is no greater violence than the violence of victorious nations (Ihlenfeld 25).

Ernst Toller (1893–1939), too, smuggles in his autobiography a cultural-historical picture of the region and refers to the known political measures taken by the authorities.

It was only after the second partition of Poland that the Eastern Frontier was annexed by the Prussians. Still, the Germans considered themselves an indigenous

²⁵ „Politik ist immer unerfreulich. Ich beschränke mich nach Möglichkeit aufs Private und Menschliche. Da läßt sich wenigstens gelegentlich Vernunft und Anstand entdecken“ (Johann 213).

population and true lords of this country and barely tolerated the Poles. The German colonists settled in villages which, like frontline strongholds, drove wedges between hostile Polish farms and manors. Germans and Poles fought stubbornly for every centimetre of the ground. A German selling a field to a Pole was considered a traitor²⁶.

A. Sturm, too, shows two worlds: on the one hand, there is an official ideology, but on the other hand there is a place for private opinion.

Bydgoszcz, where my father was transferred, lay so far away for any inhabitant of central Germany. My mother had probably never heard of the city before. In general, the Province of Poznań was an unknown country for most Germans. At school we learned that Frederick the Great, through the acquisition of Western Prussia and the northern part of Poznań region, incorporated a valuable province into Prussia, but deep down nobody wanted to have much in common with it as in fact it was not German territory²⁷.

However, when she explains the reasons why her parents settled here²⁸, the author's bottom-up perspective is closely aligned with the official policy. The fact that her father was moved here had a particular reason.

Just as today, there was a need for energetic pioneers, who disseminated the Germanic element in the half-Polish lands. My father was precisely such an energetic pioneer who, by his very appearance, sharp mind and sincere patriotism, largely contributed to this dissemination²⁹.

²⁶ "Erst bei der zweiten Teilung Polens fiel die Ostmark an Preußen. Aber die Deutschen betrachteten sich als die Ureinwohner und die wahren Herren des Landes und die Polen als geduldet. Deutsche Kolonisten siedelten ringsum in den flachen Dörfern, die wie vorgeschobene Festungen sich zwischen die feindlichen polnischen Bauernhöfe und Güter keilten. Die Deutschen und Polen kämpften zäh um jeden Fußbreit Landes. Ein Deutscher, der einem Polen Land verkaufte, war als Verräter geächtet" (Toller 2).

²⁷ "Bromberg, wohin mein Vater versetzt war, lag einem Mitteldeutschen deshalb unendlich fern; meine Mutter hatte früher wohl kaum den Namen dieser Stadt nennen hören, wie überhaupt die Provinz Posen den meisten Deutschen ein unbekanntes Land war. Man hatte in der Schule gelernt, daß Friedrich der Große durch die Erwerbung Westpreußens und des nördlichen Teils von Posen seinem Preußen eine wertvolle Provinz einverleibt hatte; aber man mochte persönlich nicht viel damit zu tun haben, war es doch nicht echt deutscher Boden" (Sturm 4).

²⁸ A. Sturm's father was J. H. Deinhardt (1805-1867), head teacher of the Bydgoszcz High School in the years 1844-1867.

²⁹ "Man brauchte auch in jener Zeit, gerade wie heute, kraftvolle Pioniere für das Deutschtum in jener halb polnischen Gegend, und mein Vater war ein solch kraftvoller

Thus, by the very fact of their arrival in the Province of Poznań, politics entered the lives of the Roquettes, the Deinhardts or the Wollschlägers, although at the end of the day it did little to further the settlement goals that the ideologists had set for themselves. German migrants are defined here through their ethnicity rather than through the region they live in. The authors' families primarily want to cultivate national identity and distinguish themselves from other groups. This is the atmosphere they bring up children with. As far as possible, they isolate themselves from other communities and thus mentally they still live among their own, because ethnicity offers escape from this polyphonic space (Kapralski 37). They meet Poles and Jews³⁰ only in the physical space. By adopting an ethnocentric stance and excluding everything foreign (i.e. Polish), they try to strengthen their own national identity. Isolation from the ethnically dominant group of residents is confirmed by O. Roquette, who writes that „The inhabitants of Olsztyn lived on their own, separated from the Germans” (Roquette 42), and that their sense of German identity was fuelled by their „difference with regard to Polish nature” (Roquette 48).

Ultimately, in private relationships there is no glaring duplication of stereotypes and exaggerated differences. In this regard, the authors maintain a healthy distance. However, O. Roquette, who was speaking negatively about the Poles, might provoke some debate as he spoke highly about the culture of the German newcomers:

In turn, German colonists came from all directions to buy out some of the run-down estates... and through better management rose them to a better state, so that they yielded results. Former owners travelled with cash from the sale of their property to Paris, where they enjoyed themselves. Perhaps enough was left to return here, but as a rule they returned emptyhanded and settled in the smaller towns of the province, where they had no means of living. This was the situation in Gniezno³¹.

Pionier, der schon äußerlich sich Respekt verschaffen konnte und durch seinen lebhaften Geist und warmen Patriotismus dort in hohem Grade germanisierend gewirkt hat” (Sturm 4).

³⁰ The authors of Jewish descent (L. Kalisch and E. Toller) emphasize the isolation of their ethnic and religious group, despite their willingness to engage in closer contact, mainly with the Germans.

³¹ “Dagegen hatten deutsche Kolonisten aus allen Gegenden manche von den herunter gekommenen Gütern [...] gekauft, und sie durch bessere Wirtschaft wieder in besseren Stand und Ertrag gebracht. Die früheren Besitzer waren mit der Verkaufssumme nach Paris gegeist, wo sie nun ein lustiges Leben begannen. Vielleicht blieb ihnen ein

The individual experiences mentioned in this analysis are to some extent homogeneous, but in certain areas they do not exclude polyphony. This might be used to obtain a perspective on the problem that takes into account the historical context and is correlated with a bottom-up, subjective perception (Assmann 49). The individual context examined here opens biographical access to the past, and unofficial biographical memory complements the official collective one.

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kleiner Rest für die Heimkehr, meist aber kehrten sie ohne denselben zurück, um sich nun in den kleineren Städten der Provinz niederzulassen und - man wußte nicht wovon zu leben. So in Gnesen" (Roquette 42-43).

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Part Five

COMPARATIVE STUDIES –
NEW PERSPECTIVES

THE ANIMAL AS A SUBJECT: META-STRATEGIES OF COLONIZING NATURE

Joanna Bednarek, in reconstructing a definition of the subject as proposed by Rosi Braidotti, writes in the introduction to her *Po człowieku* [*The Posthuman*] as follows:

Braidotti proposes a vision of a world where communicating that which is mutually irreducible is the norm, and the subject, which is no longer defined through a narrowly understood self-consciousness, reflexivity or rationality, but through its ability to create connections – common to humans and animals – ceases to be an anthropocentric category. (Bednarek 29)

This definition of what constitutes a subject is close to me, all the more so if it is based on Paul Ricoeur's (2007) considerations, which emphasize the role of recognizing the interlocutor as a subject who is to be regarded as an equal and worthy partner of interaction. Accepting these types of assumptions allows us to recognize animals as subjects. This, however, can happen only within the context of wider social changes curtailing man's domination of nature, which can be approached in terms of postcolonial processes manifesting themselves as a protest against the colonization of the world – the world of nature. In this regard, undertaking studies about animal-subject can be understood as a more specific consideration of a much wider discourse dealing with the topic of the human condition and its relation with the non-human condition.

This question is aptly put by Charles Taylor:

Once society no longer has a sacred structure, once social arrangements and modes of action are no longer grounded in the order of things or the will of God, they are in a sense up for grabs. They can be redesigned with their consequences for the happiness and wellbeing of individuals as our goal. The yardstick that henceforth applies is that of instrumental reason. Similarly, once the creatures that surround us lose the significance that accrued to their place in the chain of being, they are open to being treated as raw materials or instruments for our projects. (Taylor 5).

Taylor's perspective is precarious, because if actions are to be justified only on the basis of their instrumentality (their use value in achieving a given aim), then everything can be permitted. If we allow ourselves to treat an animal that way, then what is to stop us also from mistreating humans or handicapped children? This is the rhetorical question Peter Singer (2009) poses, continuing Taylor's considerations.

Although colonial, and especially postcolonial, discourse in contemporary humanities is undoubtedly directed at an analysis of questions regarding cultural dominance, we can nonetheless discern an interesting current whereby already developed theoretical apparatus are adapted to an old-new area: the colonization of nature. The classic works of Edward Said (2003) and Franz Fanon (2004), regarded already as canon in postcolonial discourse, aimed to destabilize the intellectual groundwork providing support for the kind of approach Western culture has had towards the rest of the world. These works have found a new application, being as they are "transferred" to the discussion of colonizing nature. Postcolonial theories attempt to account for the domination of one type of discourse, which in this case happens to take on a Eurocentric perspective imposing itself on the rest of the world. It is in this way that postcolonialism, constituting an opposition to this Eurocentric, dominant point of view, creates the conditions for establishing equilibrium between what is European and what remains outside of Europe.

What these abovementioned writers have aptly recognized is that a considerable portion of European cultural dominance of non-European areas is carried out by means of language and narratives which objectify the Other. I researched this problem elsewhere (Mamzer 61-79) not only by analysing this phenomenon from a linguistic standpoint, but by treating it, in the spirit of the linguistic turn in the-

ory, as an expression of broadly understood cultural texts. Every cultural product, and thus every “text”, represents a particular perception of reality, which, by means of that ‘text’, is then communicated outside. It is in this context that I was interested in how the language of a cultural text reflects the relationship with the Other, as defined by Emmanuel Levinas (1993).¹

In the text discussed I attempted to identify the strategies employed in relation to the cultural (ethnic) Other, which reduces it to an object. These strategies include: divesting it of its name, representing the person not as an individual subject but as a representative of a group, using a group of people as a background for one, distinctive individual; keeping people unaware of what is about to happen to them (e.g. photographing them and later using those photographs without their consent), etc. More strategies could be enumerated; suffice it to say that they all gravitate towards depersonalization and depreciation. Devaluing another person and depriving them of their individuality form the basis on which to realize behavioural practices that lead towards exploitation and therefore colonization.

What is more, within the category of colonization, if it is to be realized either through linguistic, cognitive or more direct and practical strategies, it is necessary to create binary oppositions based on hierarchies, thereby allowing one to define the difference between the colonizer and colonized. Creating this opposition constitutes a condition *sine qua non* for carrying out the process of colonization. These strategies are established in much the same way in relation to cultural differences as to any “different world, which is to be colonized”. Later in the essay I hope to identify the significance of the increasingly visible tendency of adapting an already established postcolonial conceptual apparatus for the purpose of approaching questions connected with gender. If one would want to view traditionally understood social roles as connected with biological differences resulting from sex, one will notice a nod to the biological elements in this particular tangent of the discussion. I mention this because it is worth remembering

¹ In this text I presented visual citations – fashion photography which was presented by white models in ethnically diverse cultural contexts – in India or African countries where the indigenous population was treated as the background for the white model and the well-known designer clothes she was presenting. These types of practices inspired me to critically consider the question of how to talk about cultural differences in order not to lose the central perspective of treating representatives of ethnic groups as subjects.

that colonization, as a process of conquering and appropriating territories outside the borders of one's country, or, more broadly speaking, outside one's territory (in all aspects of the word), began with the aspirations of superpowers, based on the desire to dominate and exploit nature, understood here broadly, but especially as a source of natural resources.

In this context I would like to refer to a certain kind of turn, one that is open to a linear analysis, i.e. an analysis of the processes of colonization carried out in terms of how dominion over nature is established; next, we will move to an analysis of colonization as cultural domination, which would lead to an analysis of colonization understood in terms of "post", i.e. postcolonialism. This I would like to approach broadly – as a protest against colonization, understood as usurping domination in general or over culture, societies or social categories (or many other dimensions, such as postcolonializing language), as well as over nature. In this regard, the process of postcolonialization acquires a multidimensional aspect in relation to the "subject of colonization".

I think that today we are dealing with a trend in colonial and postcolonial studies which imposes a kind of holistic, or perhaps universalist, approach when talking about the human being as such. Apart from the various forms of domination of one group over another, or over particular social, cultural, and natural areas, what also emerges is the human/nature binary opposition. When applied, this opposition introduces another kind of optics: here a person devoid of any concrete identification becomes the perpetrator of colonization over the natural world. This presents us with a wider perspective which defines the "genetic" characteristics of a human determining our propensity to conquer something or someone. It is worth recalling in this context the notion of speciesism. This notion, introduced by Richard Ryder (2005) and disseminated by Peter Singer (2009), refers to a critical approach to the domination asserted by humans of other species. The considerations based on this notion aim to provoke discussion and bring awareness of the baselessness of what for many people is a justified prejudice founded on the membership to a particular species, and finally to change the social attitudes and improve the living conditions of animals co-existing with humans. The term speciesism allows for a systematic approach to the moral law held by *homo sapiens* to exploit other species for their benefit. Treating animals like

objects constitutes, as stated earlier, one of the symptoms of a broader current of thought concerning the environment, with particular attention given to a balanced development of the human race, i.e. a development that will take responsibility for conserving the currently accessible resources for future generations. In other words, a state in which fulfilling the needs of the present generation does not in any way diminish the chances of future generations fulfilling their needs.

It is at this point that I would like to notice the following shift. The first stage of drawing attention to the existence of colonizing practices in the relations between representatives of the European culture and cultures outside Europe took the form of a critical consideration of how Western culture treats people who are not its representatives. This initial stage of reflection, inaugurated by Franz Fanon (1985), Edward Said (2003), continued by Gayatri Spivak (1990), should be treated as the first significant attempt within the humanities to address the topic of cultural oppression in rational-scientific terms. Certainly one can search for the roots of this trend in The Frankfurt School (particularly in *Der autoritäre Charakter* by Theodor Adorno), which dealt with the ethic relations practiced by the Nazis. The first impulse to reflect on the oppressive nature of colonization was, therefore, directed towards the relation between a dominating group and a dominated group.

I would treat this incipient awareness of social inequality as a trigger activating an evolutionary mechanism of awakening and reinforcing empathy that can be transferred to specific actions meant to change the negative apprehension of a given situation. That is why critical reflection was able to raise awareness in a broader group of recipients to the fact that people were treated differently and that these differences were used as the basis for legitimizing morally reprehensible, or at least dubious, behaviour.

The second stage of challenging broadly understood colonization could be referred to as the tendency to promote the eradication of all sorts of discrimination in an effort to equate the opportunities of discriminated people. Postcolonial discourse often draws attention to the oppressive treatment in Western culture of women and the LGBT community.

After the second wave of critical thought about colonization, which took place in the 1960s in America, there appeared a third current which brought about a realization that the meaning of coloniza-

tion goes beyond the acquisition of territories inhabited by people and that it transcends the cultural-social-economical dimension. This current aims to raise awareness of the fact that the initial process of colonization involved the conquest of nature, its exploitation and destruction. Elżbieta Połusznna draws attention to this observation in her excellent publication about ecological extremism:

It was then that for the first time the conviction that there is a correlation between expanding the exploitation of nature and the rise of prosperity was questioned. At the same time, broader circles of society (mainly in USA) became increasingly aware of an impending ecological crisis endangering every living thing on Earth. As a result, organizations whose aim it was to lobby on the part of the natural world began mushrooming across the country. (Połusznna 9)

This is, in my view, the third, deeper wave of critical thought on the subject of how humans behave towards not only the human world but the natural world as well. I treat this third stage as an expression of a higher level of moral and ethical development, which sees the world surrounding humans (construed now as a species) as acquiring the characteristics of a subject. What is more, this subject is to be understood in a particular sense, as we become aware of the responsibility for what is colonized, particularly because it is unable to actively resist colonization. I allow myself to regard that kind of perception as an indication of a higher moral status, as it is inextricably bound to the fulfilment of the basic needs constituting the base of Abraham Maslow's (1970) pyramid of needs. Only after fulfilling all the physical needs, safety, affiliation and self-realization, can one think about fulfilling one's meaning of life, which seems to include the concern not only for one's self and one's needs, but also the desire to expand that concern to other human and nonhuman beings. It comes as no surprise then that ecological awareness and animal rights are realized particularly intensely in those countries where the standard of life, measured by economic standards, is high and where people do not have to worry about survival.

What can cause doubt is placing the human being in opposition to nature. In my opinion, a human being is inextricably bound with the rest of the natural world in the same way as other animals. I treat *homo sapiens* as a species, with the same rights as other species of animals (this is an approach propagated by many researchers dealing with Charles Darwin's (2013) and Frans de Waal's (2006, 2013) etho-

logy). This is why I think the classic philosophical dilemma which concentrates on where to demarcate the difference between nature and culture is, in essence, baseless, as culture should be treated as a distinctive product of the natural capabilities of humans who are developed and able to think abstractly. Culture as a product of unique aptitudes of the human intellect constitutes a specific aspect of the species, but that does not give us license to grant ourselves more expansive rights and privileges. My approach would construe the human being as an element coproducing the natural world. In this sense, the exploitation of nature, which is the basic motivation for colonization, is so difficult to accept that it succeeds only in provoking concrete actions on an empirical level that aim towards limiting the negative consequences of its exploitation².

At this point it is worth noticing an element that is ignored by those who feel that humans are entitled to more rights. The fact that humans are capable of abstract thought, advanced planning, predicting the future and other similar abilities related to cognition entails certain responsibilities: the more developed our thinking, the greater are the expectations to take responsibility for our actions. If we are to place humans on a pedestal above other animals, if we are to accord it greater abilities and potential, then automatically we ought to demand more responsibility for their actions. If we accept what in my opinion is an illegitimate thesis that humans have the right to unlimited use of natural resources, then what follows automatically is a moral responsibility to take care of what one uses. Treating humans as a species with an equal claim to use the natural world does not exempt them from assuming responsibility for how they use it.

In the context of the abovementioned considerations regarding the colonization of nature, Eric Baratay's work, aptly titled *Animal Point of View*, is of particular interest. Baratay should be regarded as a pioneer of this new discipline in the humanities advocating that history be

² Pop-cultural texts are particularly interesting in this context. A perfect illustration of this is a commercial for cleaning appliances: a lonely castaway is walking along the shore and comes across a box with a vacuum cleaner. He turns it on and begins "cleaning" the plants on the island and gradually he uncovers a beautiful concrete sidewalk, lovely new garden furniture, outdoor ceramic stairs leading to a house occupied by a beautiful young woman, a cultural icon of attractiveness. Such constructed messages reinforce the binary opposition: human-colonizer in relation to nature, the colonized world (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IH9HpOaTWE> (access date: 12.27.2014)).

written from the point of view of animals. In this work, the author attempts to prove that history has been written from a predominantly human point of view. Even when animals were mentioned, they were relegated to a side note, a marginal theme, appearing in the background of the main narrative which exclusively revolved around human events. Baratay argues that this perspective on the world is extremely anthropocentric and indicates how changes in our human world and our human way of life impact the history of animals:

Another consequence of the West enriching itself during the course of the nineteenth century is the increased amount of free time, which allowed people to indulge in leisure and entertainment which increasingly gained in importance and a century later became a part of everyday life. In some of these activities animals are used, for example in hunting, riding, various 'spectacles': circus, zoo, animal fights and fights with humans. One such sport, bullfighting, has achieved success and notoriety in intellectual and artistic circles as well as in the media. (Baratay 31)

To quote an African proverb: "As long as lions have no historians of their own, Safari stories will keep glorifying the hunter" (Baratay 33). Baratay decisively indicates that every author of history depicts it from his point of view. Because there are many authors, there are many points of view. He also notices that:

An interesting thing is that the pursuit of achieving this conceptual turn, this shift in perceiving animals is gaining momentum. When I began work on this subject in 2007, I could only rely on a few, fairly new philosophers and anthropologists [...]. In 2011, when I was editing this chapter before publication, this turn is under way in many disciplines: in zootechnics [...], in ethnology and sociology, wanting to portray the status of such animals as cows and dogs as individualized actors. (Baratay 3)

It should not go without mention that work is already under way in the fields of archaeology, historiography and methodology of history in an effort to demonstrate that history is never represented, but is instead created by the discoverer, who interprets the discovered artefacts through his or her cultural lens, thereby imposing on these artefact meaning that is rooted in their native (i.e., familiar) culture. Ian Hodder wrote about this as early as in the 1980s. His *Reading the Past: Current Approaches to Interpretation in Archaeology*, co-written with Scott Hutson, was published for the first time in 1986. In this

work the authors draw attention to “reading” and not “discovering” history, revealing the indispensable role of interpretation which is grounded in the unique and individual situation of the historian that bears on how historical and archaeological artefacts are read. This current of thought was developed in Poland by Jerzy Topolski’s school of historiography and methodology of history.

After citing many statistics, Baratay attempts to write history from the animal’s perspective. The author emphasizes how difficult it is to adopt a perspective according to which people would at least have to concede that an animal’s point of view exists, that animals communicate and do so differently than humans. “Differently” does not mean “worse”; in fact, in many situations it actually means “better”. Just like in the case of history created by historians, so here we are dealing with a process of (often times unconscious) projection.

People notice only a portion of experiences and signs, interpreting them with ease according to their own codes, but a problem occurs in relation to all the Others. What does a European ethnologist understand when researching another population? We know that he balances between applying his own interpretations, even the most developed, for example structuralism, and the desire to capture their reality; the whole history of ethology and ethnology is marked by this dilemma. (Baratay 273)

Baratay’s work attempts to show how the human desire to retain supremacy over the living world finds its representation in the employed strategies of depreciating the world. This is to be found in Claude Lévi-Strauss’s statement, as quoted by Baratay: “Every man was, is and will be one of a kind. But a man does not differ in that regard from any other living creature, not even the smallest whose unique status he does not even deign to respect” (Baratay 327).

Baratay believes that supporters of thinking about animals in an objectifying mode are inspired and inspire Bruno Latour’s (2004) work regarding the active role of objects, which, when treated as actors, alter their social relation and interaction. Classifying animals as “objects” surrounding humans allows Latour to confer on them the status of actors actively affecting them. The actor is not only regarded as a subject, but is also seen to have the power to affect the observer. This type of thinking, although initially evoking resistance, finally allows us to grant animals the status of active and conscious actors.

Baratay proposes a broadened definition of the Levinasian "Other":

As of yet, researchers have situated among Others merely a handful of the human population: women, slaves, societies living outside established borders, under the influence of ethnocentrism often referred to as barbarian or primitive, and not only in Europe, but everywhere else. (Baratay 39)

Treating animals as an Other emphasizes their hitherto negated subject position, comparable to the same kind of change that took place in relation to how we think about people of non-European descent: "The portrait of an animal is subjected to environmental variations: an organism trained to react, a genetically conditioned living being, a machine processing various problems, a conscious being endowed with subjectivity. . ." (Baratay 46). That is to say, in our behaviour towards animals, we should implement the achievements of cultural relativism, stemming out of anthropology, ethology and philosophy. Employing the category of "Other" in our relations with animals opens up a different perspective: empathetic, humanitarian and subject-oriented.

It is here that we arrive at the point where it would be worthwhile to look at the problem from a meta-level. I am drawing closer to approaching the issue indicated in the title of this paper, i.e. meta-strategies of colonizing nature. I view them as a coherent and interrelated system of three meta-strategies, allowing us to create a construct that I would call the "colonizer's stance". The term "stance" already functions in sociology and psychology and is defined as a permanent construct consisting of three components: affection, behaviour and cognition (often referred to as ABC). I would propose to accept the existence of these three meta-strategies allowing us to create, maintain and realize the colonizing stance. This model is general enough that it can be utilized not only in the process of colonizing nature, but also in relation to any other example of colonization. That is why I am referring to the mentioned strategies as "meta-". The difficulty that arises when one has to unequivocally indicate which of the discussed three meta-strategies is primary and which are derivative. It is beyond doubt that all three take part in an interactive, dynamic relationship. The more they are aligned, the more permanent and resistant to modification is the final construct as a stance.

The linguistic meta-strategy makes it possible to describe the world. It has a cognitive dimension, making it possible for us to for-

multate judgments and opinions; also, it does not contain an affective element, though it can be used to name emotions. Ludwig Wittgenstein duly established that the limits of our language determine the limits of our world (Wolniewicz: 1970). Although linguists, translators and philosophers are still embroiled in debates on how exactly this opinion should be interpreted, its point is quite clear: language determines the limits of our perception. The richer, more diverse is our language, the richer and more diverse is our experience of our environment. The simpler our language, the simpler our understanding of our world. In support of the thesis that the linguistic frame of describing the world influences other meta-strategies constituting the post-colonial stance, a second concept should be mentioned: the concept of performative speech acts developed by John Austin (1962). This concept refers to a particular type of speech which is also an act. Here we are dealing not only with naming the world and conferring onto it meaning, but also with bringing into motion particular actions which result in perceptible changes. Apart from the logical aspect, what also appears here is a concept of language that exerts a direct influence on the reality encountered by the knowing subject. This concept is especially important in the context of this paper, as it traces the relationship between the colonizing meta-strategy of language and behavioural meta-strategy.

A perfect exemplification of this kind of language, one which also lends itself well to Wittgenstein's and Austin's approach, is the language used by hunters. The way in which the hunting community functions will be also used below for the purpose of illustrating the next two meta-strategies: behavioural and affective.

Distancing yourself from your prey takes on an extreme dimension here. The animal is treated as an object, providing entertainment for humans. This approach, which effectively strips the animal of its dignity and position as a subject and denies it the possibility of being recognized as an actor, finds its reflection in language. Blood is "paint". The heart is only an "organ". The shot animal is "game" etc. By erecting a verbal barrier, the hunter is able to separate himself from the animal's feelings, thus allowing the person to kill without guilt. These types of practices are used in everyday life, for example when we refer to animal entrails as "offal" or when we say that an animal "dies", whereas a person "passes away". A dead animal is a "carcass", whereas a dead person is referred to as a "corpse". These

examples speak to the same convention that makes it possible to distance oneself by means of a particular language. Using this language is related to a particular cognitive strategy, allowing one to look at the living world in a hierarchical manner. The perception of the world is primary, whereas using a particular language and then activating particular behaviour is secondary.

The behavioural meta-strategy stems from the linguistic meta-strategy; it strengthens and legitimizes it. Accepting Austin's concept of performative utterances goes some way towards explaining behaviour acts. Calling an animal an "object" automatically puts into motion the process of objectifying it. This allows us to exploit and instrumentalize such objects – after all, that is what they are there for. The example of the particular language use by hunters, mentioned earlier in the paper, apart from dividing the surrounding world into subjects and objects, reinforces this activity in yet another way, i.e. by indicating the existence of a group. Knowing the particular language used by a community (the more closed it is, the more hermetic and arcane their language appears to outsiders) constitutes proof of membership to that particular group. The sense of belonging to a community activates psychological processes proper to group mentality, specifically conformism and diffusion of responsibility. The first makes it possible for members of a group to live in a subjectively created, and socially reinforced, conviction that certain behaviours are appropriate and others are not. Even if an individual might not agree internally with a particular behaviour or judgment, the existence of a group exerts social pressure on that individual to comply with the majority. The second mechanism allows individuals to avoid responsibility for their actions ("I'm doing what others are doing" or "there are so many people, so let someone else speak out"). There is, however, yet another mechanism at work here: adopting the language of a group also allows the individual to describe the surrounding world and feel a sense of community with others, which, in turn, allows people to reinforce the conviction that their behaviour is appropriate (psychologically: rationalization). Behaviour is regarded appropriate, as it is explained by tradition, ethos, social proof of appropriateness (based on the fact that others behave in a similar way). It is, therefore, not only language that objectifies the natural world; the fact of belonging to a social group that sees the world identically (similarly) also legitimizes one's approach to the state of things. The example of the hun-

ting community is especially poignant in this regard. For example, for many hunters drinking alcohol during hunting is a legitimate ritual. The quote below exemplifies the presence of the abovementioned meta-strategies:

For me hunting without drinking (in Polish: "oblewiny"), is like a wedding reception without music. I drink after shooting every animal. If I shoot a bull, it's a wedding reception. I'm not ashamed to write about this, because I don't consider this indecent. I've never seen anyone after a hunt standing in a circle with other hunters drinking juice. Celebrating with alcohol integrates hunters and I see no reason to condemn it. If there is alcohol, the celebration lasts until the morning and that's the whole point; and if women are involved, then there's nothing missing from happiness. I add that I'm not addicted. Best regards to everyone who can't drink. Don't be ashamed for this. DB. ("Dziennik Łowiecki")

In this quote we can see language which instantiates emotional distance (e.g. "I shoot a bull" and not "I'll kill a bull"); rationalization of behaviour (e.g. "hunting without "oblewiny" is like a wedding reception without music) and objectification (alcohol and women: equating these "objects" as indispensable for a good time).³

Finally, we arrive at the third meta-strategy: affective. It is obvious that by linguistically categorizing and classifying objects we set in motion the process of rationalization (thinking about an object in terms of the categories we imposed on it), and, consequently, particular behaviours and emotions. Using language that distances itself and classifies, e.g. animals, as objects, and not subjects, allows us to "shoot" them and not "kill" them; it allows us to celebrate taking a trophy (object), instead of crying over a lost life (subject). I would argue that it is impossible to unequivocally indicate the order in which these meta-strategies are triggered, as it is ultimately variable. I would also propose that we accept their interactive characteristics in creating a stance, which I would call "colonizing stance". I predicate my argument on the assumption that the differentiated three meta-strategies can be activated in a different order, which can be defined as a result of a particular situation (e.g. stepping on an insect. "It's only a bug". First we have an affective strategy, which fulfils the pur-

³ Clear evidence of how language triggers certain behavior is proposed by Basil Bernstein's concept of sociolinguistic codes, which linguistically define social situations and consequently set in motion certain behaviors among people: B. Bernstein, *Class, Codes and Control*. Vol.1. *Theoretical Studies Towards Sociology of Language*, London 1971.

pose of distancing oneself from killing the insect, but appears as a result of the event. "It's a bug", so I can kill it, because it will bite me - categorizing the insect as an object, in addition a dangerous one, justifies killing it). The second factor influencing the activation of these meta-strategies is the process of socialization and the resultant internalized values and actions.

The hunting community was used here to exemplify these three meta-strategies, but an identical processes can also be observed in other professions, e.g. among doctors and veterinarians, social workers, therapists, and laboratory workers conducting experiments on animals. These professions are particularly vulnerable to the negative process of absorbing emotions that appear during their work in relation to the people and animals who are recipients of their services or are directly exposed to their activities (experiments). Establishing distance from them as well as from their problems constitutes a method of creating emotional barriers, which are to result in improved effectiveness and the possibility, for instance, of carrying out painful procedures. In these cases we are also dealing with a stance that I call colonizing and which hierarchizes the world, conferring its elements a particular place in a subjectively created order, sanctioned by subjectively selected rationalizations.

Conclusion

The 1960s and early 1970s saw attempts to reverse the man/world relation. Various groups attempted to emphasize that further unfettered colonization of nature will lead to irreversible ecological consequences, followed by social consequences, which is why they claimed it is necessary to exhort society to embrace conscious consumption, moderation and rationalization: "The turning point in the creation of green extremism was the decision prompted by the decision made by the United States Forest Service [...], to allot 36 million acres of forestland for commercial exploitation" (Połuszná 9). This decision reflected a lack of pro-ecological thinking on the part of the US government and also became the clarion call for radical social movements fighting for conservation and restrictions on the exploitation of natural resources. From that time forward, we can observe a dynamic rise in the amount of ecological and animalist organizations and their

radicalization. However, on the other hand, we can also see this resistance towards the colonization of nature being propagated by more moderate means.

Another interesting issue connected with discrimination has emerged from within the debate on postcolonialism and it is one that I will only signal here – it is that of environmental injustice. This recently discovered aspect of colonization and its attendant consequences are expressed in the form of discrimination. It has been observed that colonizing nature entails negative repercussions for humans, particularly those who live in economically deficient conditions. These and other discriminated groups are in danger of living in areas devastated ecologically. Apart from other negative consequences of colonizing nature, there is here yet another problem that has been hitherto ignored. It should be added that discriminated social groups usually have more difficult access to financial resources, and their economical potential is much lower than is the case with more privileged groups. Racial, ethnic, gender, and age discrimination is compounded by the subpar living conditions to which these groups are consigned.

It is not difficult to notice that the meta-strategies of colonizing nature coincide with the strategies used for the purpose of colonizing culturally defined territories, and, as I have indicated above, they can also be employed for every process of colonization. The three meta-strategies distinguished earlier are: the linguistic/cognitive strategy, the behavioural strategy, and the affective strategy. The cognitive aspect can be located in the production of discourses that depreciate the animal world, developing scientific discourses which legitimize such practices (the above mentioned story can serve as an example), legitimizing actions of an instrumental nature that serve the purpose of exploitation. Furthermore, depersonalizing and depreciating particular animals, refusing them the status of actors, objectifying and reducing them to the level of passive objects facilitates the construction of cognitive barriers between what is human and what is inhuman. It is not only my opinion that this distinction is artificial and perhaps even false; however, it is one that allows people to maintain certain judgments, justify their actions and to colonize. Creating separate languages to describe the animal world, or, more broadly, to describe the natural world and to speak about the human world, allows us to reinforce that cognitive barrier (Kruczyński 21-29). Objectifying language is used here, i.e. a language that uses cultural depreciative

words (“dying” instead of “passing away”; “carcass” instead of “corpse”; “meat” instead of “body”) and a language that transmutes the subject into an object: (“tree” – “lumber”, “pig” – “livestock”, etc.). Looking at this situation from an anthropological-ethnological perspective allows us to discern clear analogies (civilized man-barbarian, primitive societies-developed societies). It is worth remembering what Ludwig Wittgenstein claimed about the mutual relationship between language and the world: that the limits of language determine the limits of knowing. Labelling by means of linguistic categories is here an important exemplification of how using language organizes our perception of the world. The second meta-strategy, behavioural, is realized thanks in part by the existence of the first, by means of dividing the world into elements that are worthy of consideration and those that are not; by using separate names in one case we are proposing a world of subjects and a world of objects in the second case. And finally the third meta-strategy, affective, allows us to build emotional barriers, thereby severing ourselves from the “object” being acted upon.

The three strategies undoubtedly are meta-strategies. The same way they were applied to the cultural Other, they are now being applied to the natural Other. Using and maintaining them is the basis for the colonizing stance, which grows in power and permanence through the mutual support of the constituent meta-strategies.

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TILL THE LIMITS OF THE VISIBLE

Erasure, which seems a completely neutral term on the face of it, describing the removal of something written or drawn, acquired a new sense in twentieth-century social practice. What had been known before ceased to be clearly recognisable. No doubt the earlier scope of significance ascribed to erasure had remained, yet in the previous century the desire to wield power over the perfectly known or totally unknown assumed ominous proportions. It became a tool of social manipulation. It is by no means an accident that erasure was willingly adopted in literature and the arts. With respect to literature, suffice it to mention in this context the names of Milan Kundera and Thomas Bernhard. The former, in *The Book of Laughter and Oblivion* describes in this perspective the history of Vladislav Clementis's hat, and the latter in *Erasure*, his last novel, unmasks the concealment of the historical past of his compatriots. No doubt, however, erasure was the most vociferous in George Orwell's *1984*.

Erasing, retouching

He recognised the Ministry of Truth as an (indispensable) institution that guarantees the proper functioning of the totalitarian system. One could very easily think about the corresponding authorities in Soviet Russia. Just like the Ministry of Truth made sure that information correctness responded to the political demands of the day, the

social database in Stalin's state was adjusted in a similar manner: all the data related to particular people who fell into disfavour with the regime were removed. This applied to both texts mentioning their names and their images. Their removal from social life went hand in hand with the condemnation of their memory. Such measures were applied to, e.g. Leon Trotsky, Lev Kamenev and Nikolai Yezhov, who were retouched in the photographs featuring Vladimir Lenin and Josef Stalin. The removal or erasure of an image was to be tantamount to the erasure of the person himself. For political reasons, similar practices were by all means desirable elsewhere, like in Czechoslovakia after 1948. However, those who would see the condemnation of memory as a characteristic feature of the time, one more transgression of the normal, would be very much mistaken. *Domnatio memoriae* existed as early as in ancient Egypt and later in Greece and Rome. This is not our concern here, though. In the 20th century we witnessed the retouching of photographs which served a political purpose. The photograph no doubt occupies a special role among historical documents. It moreover occupies a unique position among the other media, not only visual. A question arises what in this case the erasure of memory is and what its consequences are.

Some time ago, for instance in the 1930s, retouching photographs required a special technical skill and not everyone could do it. A well-erased figure did not undermine the foundation myth of photography, i.e. what the photograph represents corresponds to reality. In other words, an image in the photograph must have appeared in front of the camera lens the moment the shutter was released. Someone's absence in a photograph might, then, testify that this person had never been in the picture in the first place. One other thing was that many vividly remembered the photographs as including the erased individuals. This is the problem of representation in classical photography: does it really depict what is absent? Retouching is disturbing and compounds the problem. After all, not only what is in the picture has existed, but what is not in the photograph may have been there. The erased figures conveyed a very important message. Their disappearance was tantamount to the disappearance of the old world, which was to replace the world as of that moment given to a permanent revolution. To my mind, the absence of Trotsky, Kamenev and Yezhov in photographs was meant to be recognised by their contemporaries. These men belonged to the old world and had to go together

with it. The empty space indicated, then, what existed on the outside and was not directly present in the photograph.

The following is another event which is somehow linked with the above procedure. "Somehow", as these are events from two different worlds, and therefore there are as many similarities as there are differences here. The latter in fact dominate. There is one detail, however, that is an evident link between them. First things first, however. In 1953 Robert Rauschenberg erased a Willem de Kooning drawing. The resultant nearly blank page bore the inscription *Erased de Kooning Drawing. Robert Rauschenberg 1953*; the artist framed it in a golden frame. This gave the work its autonomy; it became an object of art to which a particular meaning was hard to ascribe. As a result, various contexts emerged which were to legitimise interpretation. Points of reference could include both Rauschenberg's white paintings made at that time, or his assemblages, exposing the objective character of a work of art. Other significant references included the activities of the Dadaists, who permanently destroyed all meaning ascribed to conventionalised actions of conventional artists. Most probably it is because of this last reference that the circumstances of the making of the *Erased de Kooning Drawing* are invoked.

Namely, de Kooning was an artist uniquely admired by Rauschenberg. In the early 1950s, he was seen as a seminal representative of action art, one of the two currents of Abstract Expressionism appreciated at that time in the United States. The artist enjoyed tremendous popularity among the New York bohemians. It is most probably because of this reason that Rauschenberg approached him for a drawing which he intended to erase later. De Kooning obliged but, to spice up the matter a bit, asked for a bottle of whisky in return for the favour. In order not to make things easier for Rauschenberg, he chose a work which would not be easily or completely erased. This led to the creation of a work which intended to be a blank sheet of paper yet cannot be erased completely as it bears traces of the earlier presence of a drawing.

What, then, is this blank sheet of paper? A lot of relevant questions were posed, or rather put in order, by Tony Godfrey. It would be worthwhile to list them here: Was the allegedly erased drawing really de Kooning's work? Was the entire endeavour motivated by the desire to mock action painting, or rather by avant-garde zeal? Was the placement of the erased drawing within a golden frame only a joke?

If not, whose work is it really: de Kooning's or Rauschenberg's? Finally, is this an act of destruction or creation? (Godfrey 63–64)

It is undoubtedly hard to come up with unambiguous answers to the above questions. This is not the right time and place to discuss the issue, albeit cursorily. Still, interesting in this respect is a remark made by Arthur C. Danto who, accounting for the modernist narrative concerning monochromatic paintings, noticed that the white monochromatic square should be appreciated as the effect of the removal of colour, the removal of form other than its own and shapes other than the simple shape of the ideal square. In this case, according to Danto, the white square would mark the end of the road, leaving to the painting little, if any, room for manoeuvre (Cf. Danto 233)

The modernist narrative could be easily linked to Rauschenberg's creation. After all, at Black Mountain he himself made white paintings. He stripped them of colour and shape other than their own. The erased drawing might, then, be a simple consequence of similar thinking. Apart from similarities, one should be aware of a crucial difference, though. What is at stake here is not the crowning of all that has taken place in painting and the completion of all, but rather the clearing of space for further action. Urszula Czartoryska wrote in pretty much the same manner about the *Erased de Kooning Drawing* (Czartoryska 71). It is not the end, but a new beginning. Let us reiterate: not the end, but a new beginning.

Here we might see a similarity between retouched photographs and the erased drawing: simultaneously a closure and an opening. In both cases this is a political gesture, even if the politics concerned are very different.

The theology of Malevich's squares

The proclamation of ends and new beginnings in the modern era was not rare. Modernity itself was underpinned by the same assumption. A closure and a simultaneous opening can be seen as the foundations of the era, in fact. Later this idea was repeatedly revisited. In art, this was the ultimate departure from all kinds of illusionism and mimeticism. An idea emerged that art itself should be the object of art. While the onset of this idea was ascribed to the threshold of the last three decades of the nineteenth century, in the works of the Im-

pressionists, it was much more spectacular in abstract painting. A special place here no doubt belongs to Kazimir Malevich. His *Black Square* was acclaimed by Danto as a "symbol of erasing the art of the past" (Danto). This comes as no surprise really, as Malevich himself indicated that the generation of the 20th century are the sum total and a page of a new book. He stressed that he and his contemporaries divide time by a clear-cut boundary and place on the first page a plane in the shape of a square, black as mystery. For the artist, this plane was to become a sign of its time (Cf. Malevich 2004).

As we can see, the idea of erasure definitely preceded Rauschenberg's idea. A black square, like a tombstone, slammed shut all the past things in art. At the same time, it opened up space to new, unknown horizons. This is what revolutionaries would often claim. Malevich can no doubt be called a revolutionary in art, yet we cannot lose sight of the fact that he was radically opposed to linking art with any figures of social policy. Art was to be an area of freedom. He stressed this fact, reminding that at the end of the 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th one, art rejected the burden of superimposed religious and state ideas. It thus reached out towards itself, to a form expressive of its own essence. It became a third autonomous and equitable "point of view" (Cf. Malevich 2006: 92). Exactly: a third equitable point of view ... Free from any historical obligations at that! Starting from scratch! Thus, we found ourselves, as eremites, in a desert: "No 'images of reality' - no imaginary objects - nothing besides the desert!", Malevich will add (Malevich 2006: 66). He himself is a priest of a new faith, Suprematism. Not only because he defended the purity of the doctrine. The religious context was set up by Malevich at the show where he first exhibited *The Black Square*. He placed in a room in a manner typical of exhibiting icons. The link between the square and the icon should not be seen as abuse.

There are many similarities here. Since "the icon helps experience the invisible, the 'inner form' of being, this inner character (...) is born of enlightenment, of the category of Tabor" (Evdokimov 163), the black square which brings out form from an object (Poprzęcka 197) also wants to get down to what is essential. It is patently obvious that the invisible is understood in a Platonic way. Today, what is invisible will one day be apparent to the eye. It is a precondition for existence. Only the visible exists (Markowski 21). Still, what is often at stake is the capacity of the inner eye. In order to master this skill of experien-

cing an inner form, a transformation is necessary. What is of essence in the Orthodox Church is the *transformation* taking place in liturgy (the transubstantiation of bread and wine into the body of Christ), in Malevich what is at stake is the erasure of all the established canons of creation, not excluding the Creator. The founder of Suprematism wrote about the defeat of the one to whom creation is ascribed. He moreover foreshadowed the **transformation** of everything, ourselves and the world. This was to crush forever the shell of time, and ever new **transformations** were to be taking place (underline – R.K.P) (Cf. Malevich 2004).

One can have the impression that the road taken by icon-makers can be found close to that walked by Malevich. Naturally, I mean here the transcendent objective which they wanted to achieve as a result of their actions. There is, however, a fundamental difference in this field. Irrespective of the significance we ascribe to the images represented in the icons, Malevich's black square is not meant to represent anything visually. As he himself writes, "square = impression, white background = nothingness" (Malevich 2006: 74). Impression is linked with abstraction. It is not, then, a reflection of the impression comparable to the image of an object. Neither is this a world of emotions, but an autonomous manner of their representation. The square seems to glide in the surrounding nothingness and in this perspective the entire representation sublimates the existence of the energy which the painting encapsulates.

How close it is from here to the old contention between the iconophiles and the iconoclasts. It is in order to point out, however, that Malevich does not unequivocally side with either party. One can actually get the impression that he is playing a game where both positions have their rightful place. One might say that he plays like a recluse: "Leaving civilisation, an eremite believed that he was on the verge of some crazy game a man can start, a game to earn eternity outside of time" (Przybylski 35). Trying to reach the transcendent, Malevich no doubt plays for eternity outside time. At the same time, let us add immediately, he does not escape civilisation but wishes to overtake it and place himself in a realised utopia, in the world where history, as the Spirit in Hegel, has come to its end. In this new reality, an overcoming of the epoch-making contention could take place. After all, Malevich does not get rid of an image but wants to overcome its constraints. Definitely, he is a far cry from accepting early

medieval philosophy of the image practiced by iconophiles, according to which the image was to be transparent with respect to the original (Belting 152), but he most probably comes closer to a similar way of thinking than to any figure from the world of arts copying nature.

We can then say that the fact the Malevich saved the painting itself points to his siding with the iconophiles. The painting reached transcendence, which is what theologians require of the icon. This transcendence is encapsulated in an impression rather than in objective mediation. The black square is a representation of the supra-sensory, and if so, we are getting close to the position of the iconoclasts. In his black square Malevich, as if in line with their demands, erases any and all images of divinity. Or perhaps he paints them over? Screens them? The curtain screens from view but does not obliterate. We cannot see, yet we do not question the existence of what for the time being is invisible since it will become visible in the future. Would this, then, be proof of the existence of God? If we assume a similar interpretation of meaning, then we should conclude that only in a similar way can deity be represented. As a result, we will not deal with copies of copies, with a multiplication of images which increasingly reify the original.

However, in the case of Malevich the thing does not end here. He seems to be asking: What if God exists outside of creation? Would it not be better, then, to erase his image rather than lead astray and only screen God? Perhaps *White on White* will be precisely a response to a similar question? The painting is a conundrum, for which Malevich himself is to blame. This was observed by Aaron Scharf, who highlighted that a white square at an angle on a white field had been variously interpreted. In fact, we do not know what Malevich wished to represent. Yet as the art historian observed, in the context of his other work and in light of his own statements, it was not too audacious to believe that *White on White* was to capture something close to the state of ultimate freedom, a state of nirvana, the last word of a Suprematist consciousness (Cf. Scharf 226).

In the context of the confrontation of iconophiles with iconoclasts one can also interpret *White on White* in line with apophatic theology. A white square on a white field shows *nothing*, since anything that was *something* has been erased from it. One whiteness, despite its tonal and textural differentiation, creates a tautology with the other whiteness, its background. If we assume that the way the artist

applies paint on the surface is linked to tracing, a differentiation process, then we should conclude that it is hard to follow the traces left. The traces constantly put off the possibility of recognising meaning, or else: lead us to nothing, to the invisible and thus the non-existent. This is Malevich's attitude to paintings originating in the position adopted by the iconoclasts. One other thing is whether the iconoclasts themselves would be able to accept this proposal. One thing is certain: "the visible has ceased to matter" (Danto 45).

Disappearance of reality

So far, we have been interested in the erasure of an image. At present, our concern will be the disappearance of reality. Apparently, the two phenomena are oceans apart. Ultimately, annihilation of representation, a copy of nature as Malevich saw it, should in fact help recreate reality. The entry into art of many objects, including readymades, might lead to a similar suspicion. Yet objects in art, although they were to be replaced by their copies, never exhibited their material hardness. It was more important to answer the question what happens to the object when it becomes a work of art (Danto 194). As befitting modernism, the reality of art proved more important than reality itself.

The avowed enemy of modernism, Jean Baudrillard, observed that all the modernist paintings, focused on themselves, "images where there is nothing to see"¹, lead directly to the disappearance of the world. The ready-made objects and their various equivalents cease to be objects. They only simulate them. The monochromatic paintings by Malevich, Alexander Rodchenko, Marc Rothko, Robert Rauschenberg, Ad Reinhardt, and Robert Ryman aspire to being an abstract reality and simulate true reality. Baudrillard has therefore a ready answer:

we live in a world of simulation, a world where the highest function of a sign is to make reality disappear and to this disappearance at the same time. Art does nothing else. The media today does nothing else. That is why they are condemned to the same fate. (Baudrillard 2005: 110)

¹ "Paintings with nothing to see in them" is the title of a subchapter of J. Baudrillard, *Spisek sztuki. Iluzje i deziluzje estetyczne z dodatkiem wywiadów o Spisku sztuki*. Transl. S. Królak, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Sic!, 2006, p. 50.

Realist art has always been seen as recreating the visibility of the visible and therefore doubles the visible (Evdokimov 168). This was accompanied by a sensation that in effect there is more and more of the world and there is more and more existence in it. Modernist art, while critical of copyists, did not produce any significant change according to Baudrillard. What is more, it merged with the mass media. It was, then, part and parcel of the world where images began to multiply in a haphazard and uncontrolled manner. Baudrillard saw in this process a mechanism which he compared to modern iconoclasm as follows: "Modern iconoclasm no longer consists in destroying images, but in manufacturing a profusion of images where there is nothing to see" (Baudrillard 2005: 109). The author of *The Conspiracy of Art* juxtaposed contemporary visual culture and the attendant processes with the war fought by iconoclasts with iconophiles. The conclusion was not surprising. In the Middle Ages images simulated the existence of God, and thus concealed the fact of his non-existence. Similarly, in contemporary visual culture, we may say that images, by simulating reality, lead to its disappearance and in general annihilate questions about the existence of reality (Baudrillard 2005). Just like God disappeared in the epiphanies of his own representations, which meant that there was nothing save for images (Baudrillard 10), the contemporary world has been replaced by various multiplying visualisations.

All that occurred after the end of art, i.e. after the crossing of the Rubicon of modernism, does not change the essence of things, says Baudrillard. Not only are simulation and virtualisation strong, but they wreak more and more havoc. It is hard to question the above statement since it looks at the experience of the present day from the modernist perspective. Yet even an inattentive observer of the arts would recognise that over the past thirty years, if not earlier, various attempts have been made to extend the sensory experience of art. If the visible has ceased to matter, it could be extended with the aural and the tactile. No doubt a major element of the shift is the transformation of the sacrosanct relation between the author and recipient of the work. The unidirectional flow of the stream of impressions is replaced by interactivity². What are the consequences,

² This shift was discussed e.g. by R. Kluszczyński in his book *Sztuka interaktywna. Od dzieła-instrumentu do interaktywnego spektaklu*. Warszawa 2010.

however? Maybe it is a question of a regained reality? Since the visible no longer plays the role ascribed to it in modernity, i.e. is not the most significant source of cognition, other senses should come to the rescue. The sense of touch will be the first of them. It is not a question of the dominance of one sense over another. Touch is not a cut above the rest of the senses but rather encompasses all the other ones.

In the early twentieth century, Bernard Berenson tried to extend the analysis of painting with tactile features. Naturally, he was after moving beyond purely visual perception. Leaving aside the question of usability and usefulness of the method from the perspective of art history, we should say that this is not the tactility that we have in mind with respect to contemporary art. Touch is not to be an addition which merely expands the experience of art. It should organise the perception of art and the experience of the world. It is easy to imagine that we do not mean here touching anything with one's fingers. Modern tactility indicates rather individuals entering a network of relations with other actors of the network (Latour). Such tactility boils down to experiencing the world by means of the end-bits of our nervous system. This was summed up in no ambiguous terms by Marshall McLuhan, observing that the communications media as prolongations of our senses set new proportions, not only among the senses but also between themselves, when they impact one another (Cf. McLuhan).

To tell the truth, it was Malevich himself who had written about the new communications media, the driving force of the changes taking place in modern society. It was he who noticed that to some extent, the human being was like a complex radio, receiving a number of waves of differing length, and the sum total of all of them was the worldview, surprising through evolutions (Cf. Malevich 2006).

Derrick de Kerckhove calls this interrelation of the sense a secondary tactility; it does not exclude images but supplements them (Kerckhove 46). At the same time, it redefines the notion of the image and ties it with the body. This is not, however, the approach of Hans Belting, namely that each image has its body, or a medium it cannot exist without; images seen with the inner eye will have the human body as such a medium. Kerckhove refers the notion of an image to digital devices. He observes that the icon in a computer does not play the role of a noun, or simple representation, but that of a verb. When you click on an icon and it does something for you; it performs an

action. Kerckhove maintains that in the image there is a body (our cursor, our avatar), but also a body corresponding to an image – a body of traces left in everyday motion by a physical actor (Cf. Kerckhove 46). Interactivity is not only in this perspective a form of dealing with the media, with the world. It is also an action which leaves a trace. This trace, then, is the beginning of a search for meaning in a network of interrelations. As in digital photography, where all which can be translated into the zero-one system becomes according to Kerckhove a single tangle of mutually correlated data. Therefore, the scholar could say that today, when something was a picture, it was at the same time interface (Cf. Kerckhove 47).

This is how we cross the line separating the perspective mapped out by classical humanism and open up to post-humanism. A consequence is the redefinition not only of the human body, but also of the various related forms of perception. As Rosi Braidotti observed:

Present-day information and communication technologies exteriorise and duplicate electronically the human nervous system. This has promoted a shift in our field of perception: the visual modes of representation have been replaced by sensorial-neuronal modes of simulation. (Braidotti 90)

Did not Malevich start going in this direction, followed by all those who crossed the boundary of an illusionist image? They did not predict the digital technologies of today, yet the avant-garde concepts of art radically liberated one from the image of the world inherited from the past. Not always concrete in their authors' intuitions, they nevertheless often remained open to (compatible with?) future revolutions in technology and communications. Lev Manovich is on target saying that "the avant-garde vision became materialized in the computer." (Manovich 5)

One thing remains certain in the digital reality: erasure has grown in significance and gained an additional meaning.

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CULTURAL IMPACT AS TRADITION AND CHALLENGE FOR CZECH, UKRAINIAN AND POLISH COMPARATIVE STUDIES

Until the outbreak of World War I, the status of Czech, Ukrainian and Polish Comparative Studies was affected by the political dependence of the three nations. In the period between the world wars, only Czechs and Poles could freely carry out comparative research, and after 1945, due to the loss of political sovereignty, ideology once more had an impact on the development of science. The regimes closed down such distinguished institutes as the Department of Comparative Studies at Charles University in Prague. In 1893, the first professor of comparative literature at this University was Jaroslav Vrchlický, followed by František Xaver Šalda and Václav Tille, who opted for the European dimension of local literature. After the war, the traditions were to be continued by Václav Černý, a Czech professor of Romance languages, but his Department of Comparative Studies was opened twice and suspended as many as three times, both on account of Černý's anti-communist sympathies and of his research on the affinities of Czech culture and the French tradition.

Under the pressure of Marxism, studies on the linkages between Slav. literatures and Western culture were either curbed or curtailed, and where the communists had unlimited power, as in Soviet Ukraine, "bourgeoise" comparative studies were banned as early as the 1930s. Approved was the search of "Slavic reciprocities in Slav literatures".

Remembrance of the political control of comparative studies made Julian Kornhauser come up with a pessimistic evaluation of the future of the science. The author finishes the article "The End of Slav. Comparative Studies?" with a question mark, at the same time implying the disintegration of science through the long-term focus on "Slavic unity" (Kornhauser 154).

The legacy of Czech, Ukrainian and Polish Comparative Studies derived from the time of domination by the Soviet Union does not confirm this scathing assessment. Among many relevant texts of no value, one can still find a number of reliable sources, thanks to which Slav. Comparative Studies does not need to develop within an intellectual void. Let me mention only a few figures. One of the most eminent figures of Czech Comparative Studies after 1945 was Frank Wollman (1888–1969), a member of the Prague Linguistic Circle prior to the war, interested in comparative research since the 1920s. After 1948, whenever he could, he criticised the political agenda of Comparative Studies ("Zpolitizovaná komparatistika", *Slavia* no. 26/1957) and raised other debatable issues, such as "Slavic unity", Pan Slavism and Slavophilia. In 2001, a Slavistická společnost Franka Wollmana was established at Masaryk University in Brno to continue the scholar's traditions. Of great importance was the work of the younger generation, i.e. Wollman's son, Slavomír, Josef Hrabák and Slovak Dionýz Ďurišin. In Poland after World War II, despite the dominance of ideology-laden "impact studies" and "contact studies", worthwhile theoretical texts continued to be written (by Henryk Markiewicz, Stefania Skwarczyńska, Stefan Treugutt, and Hanna Dziechcińska). The pre-war research on the linkages between Polish culture and Antiquity was continued, with Mieczysław Brahmer and Maria Strzałkowa as authority figures. In Polish Slav. Comparative Studies, I will limit myself to one name only: Halina Janaszek-Ivaničkova, renowned also thanks to her anthologies of global Comparative Studies. In Ukrainian Comparative Studies, there were noteworthy texts by Oleksander Bilecky, Hryhoriy Werwes and Dmytro Nalyvayka. In the second half of the 20th century and in the early 21st, next to traditional research centres (Kiev, Lviv), smaller institutes of Comparative Studies have sprung up in Tarnopol and Chernovce, and in eastern Ukraine: Odesa and Kharkiv.

Let us resume the question of the impact of geography and politics on each of the three offshoots of Comparative Studies Czech,

Ukrainian and Polish societies reside in an area called Central and Eastern Europe. Leaving aside the question whether the uniqueness of this space is the phantasy of politicians and writers or a fact, no doubt the geopolitical status of this area, in the shadow of the Austrian and Russian empires, sensitised the nations to the issue of cultural dominance. While in Europe, still prior to World War I, the question of cultural impact was a major focus of Comparative Studies, in this particular region it was more than just a philological problem. Especially that the clashing of dominance and subjugation, i.e. of small nations and the empire, as well as within an empire – the subjection of weaker nations to those of a stronger cultural and economic position – made the question of cultural impact a very delicate matter. This helped put forth ideas that sound fresh and modern even today.

It is worthwhile to recall this tradition, although in a short article we are limited to a few questions only: some of the ideas were formulated still in the 19th century, while others between the world wars, even if they resounded shortly after the end of the conflict with Nazi Germany.

This is what happened in the case of the lecture delivered in 1946 in Paris by the eminent Czech Structuralist, Jan Mukařovský. Although he stressed the need for analysing a literary work of art within its cultural context, Mukařovský was for a long time sceptical, as Miloš Zelenka observes, about the use of the comparative method in the research on national literature (Zelenka 64). In his literary analyses, Mukařovský drew on national literature, seeing it as a closed, self-sustaining system, accidentally permeated by insignificant elements from other systems. Mukařovský changed his position only in the 1960s, as confirmed, e.g. by his article “K dnešnímu stavu a výkladům srovnávací vědy literární”, published in *Impuls* no. 10/1967.

Despite a waning interest in Comparative Studies in the 1940s, in his aforementioned lecture delivered at the Institut des Études Slaves, published as “O strukturalizmu”, the scholar addressed the “impact” angle taken by French comparatists. Apart from the eponymous question, he polemicized with the French position which saw French culture as a model tasked with the role of “civilising” provincial literatures. Mukařovský rebuked these views and stressed the dynamism of national literature, which he saw as a changeable structure (Mukařovský 110). According to him, the process of cultural impact is similarly dynamic, as literary influence is never one-sided (an approach adop-

ted by the French scholars). The cultural relation does not generate a passive and an active role, since the party accepting specific patterns is engaged, too. Influence does not involve a mechanical "reproduction" of the original, as within the process some things are selected and others rejected, whereas the adopted elements are ordered hierarchically, their relations established in a way that does not need to respect the principles of the first literary work (111).

Mukařovský pointed out one more aspect of cultural impact. Referring to the literatures of Central and Eastern Europe, he highlighted the fact that they were in different impact zones, influenced by competitive, if not exclusive stimuli. Influence was subject to deviation arising from the clash with domestic traditions that interfered with the new factors and from the competitive impact from divergent cultural zones. The Structuralist would point to Czech literature, which in the 19th and 20th centuries was influenced by Russian as well as Polish and Western writers. The ideas and models derived from there were neither complementary, nor homogeneous. Contrary to his French colleagues, convinced that the impact of their literature may be exclusively positive, Mukařovský maintained that while the Slavic influences contributed to the unique character of Czech letters, the Western patterns were not conducive to it.

Mukařovský protested against a one-sided, selective and static perception of literary relations. Regrettably, he saw some Czech scholars as blindly subscribing to this view, erroneously haunted by the complex of the "small Czech nation".

Mukařovský's views preceded the Comparative Studies of his time. The dynamic and active theory of cultural impact anticipated the 1960s vision of the humanities as a system of viewpoints rather than established hierarchies. Mukařovský would oppose the rigid understanding of the dominant culture as follows:

Under the traditional approach, influence is seen as one-sided. Pitted against each other in permanent opposition are the influencing and the influenced entities. This approach disregards the fact that influence, if it is to be accepted, must be prepared under domestic conditions, decisive for the degree and direction of this influence. Under no circumstances does influence obliterate what the development of local art has brought about, or what the earlier and contemporary knowledge of a given society has generated. Therefore, when examining influence, one must assume that individual national arts meet as equable (never subordinating the influenced party to the influencing one [...]) Influence is not, let it

be stressed once again, a token of superiority or subordination of individual national cultures. What brings them together is their reciprocity, born out of the equity of national and equal status of their cultures (115).

The Czech scholars who return today to the pre-war tradition observe that Czech Structuralism was free from the faults of French Structuralism pointed out in 1968. They moreover stress the significance of this tradition for the construction of the Czech and Slovak School of Comparative Studies. In fact, it is evident that the careers of the major Czech comparative scholars, who matured intellectually in the period between the world wars, were influenced greatly by the Prague Linguistic Circle. The Structuralist “angle” facilitated the development of a comparatist perspective. The meetings of the Circle were attended by the young René Wellek. While he cannot be considered a Czech on account of his origin and biography, no doubt the Czech (or perhaps Central European) component was a major ingredient in the identity of one of the most eminent Comparative Studies scholars of the 20th century. Until the outbreak of World War II, Wellek’s intercultural activities involved the promotion of literature written in English in the Czech press and the promotion of Czech culture in the English-speaking world. The only major comparative text from that time is a comparative study of the output of F.H. Mácha and Byron (1937). That year, Wellek published a short article about, or actually an obituary of, Václav Tille (Wellek 7). Seminars by Tille (1867–1937), a Slav. and German Studies scholar, a professor of comparative history at Charles University in Prague had their impact on young Wellek. While he did not share many of his professor’s views, he was inspired by his idea of variables and relative cultural values, which undermined the vision of fixed hierarchies in culture.

Sensitivity to the question of cultural impact, evident in Mukařovský and other scholars from the region, stemmed from the need to overcome cultural provincialism and to “catch up with Europe”, and at the same time from the fear of imitation. Therefore many intellectuals were intrigued by the preservation of equilibrium between modernisation of the language of art through the use of European elements and the search for an independent path. One of such intellectuals was Karel Čapek who, while not in the inner circle of comparative studies, addressed the question of cultural impact. This is the pivotal issue of his *Essay for Jonathan*, written for 6 years (1932–1938). The writer’s considerations were made more dramatic by the immi-

ment war and a return to reflections on the legitimacy of Czechoslovak culture and the Czechoslovak state. Čapek rejected the arguments of sceptics, who criticised the secondary nature of Czech legacy. Instead, he defended the right of the legacy of other nations to be seen as an accessible treasure trove, probed in order to enrich one's own culture, without the complex of being an imitator, though, since inspiration, transferred to another context, is never a repetition.

It seemed that the question of the usefulness Czech culture departing from the stronger and more developed German culture was conclusively resolved during the national revival. Čapek's essay indicated that under unfavourable circumstances the problem re-emerged. No wonder that in the 19th century and long afterwards, during a heated debate about how to understand the national character of culture, the suspicion of succumbing to unwelcome cultural impact may have had tragic consequences for the lives and careers of even the most outstanding artists. Otakar Hostinský (1847–1910), renowned for the development of national aesthetics, was one of the few who defended the music of Bedřich Smetana against the hostile conservative Czech public. Hostinský, creating a philosophy of the history of art from the point of view of the artistic progress of a "small nation", identified four stages of this process. The first one is characterised by an increase in the number of works, while the second one by the appearance of their new forms. The third one sees new combinations of previously existing forms, whereas the fourth stage is marked by the emergence of innovative means of artistic expression (Kučera 393). As the Czech aesthetician observed, especially during the second and third stages, national art must open up to European patterns, its aesthetics corresponding to the artistic currents of the day. Entering the debate about the Czech national opera, the critic located it in the context of the most outstanding works of European music rather than of Czechs' favourite folk songs. He defended Smetana when the composer was accused of transferring to the Czech stage of Wagner's "Germanic" impact and of subordinating the national to foreign influence, German at that.

Hostinský's concept stressed dynamic influence: he did not regard the Czech composer as a passive imitator of a German musician who "civilises" the province by imitating the accomplishments of a higher culture. He saw him as capable of applying foreign patterns so that they can grow into the domestic culture and create new artistic quali-

ties. The struggle of the Czech public with Smetana and the struggle for Smetana of elite group of writers, philosophers, musicians aware of the need for a new art intensified in the late 1860s and actually continued till the composer's death; passing away in a psychiatric institution, Smetana was convinced that he had not created a national opera, which had been his great expectation all along.

Smetana died in 1884. It seems symbolic that the foundations for Ukrainian Comparative Studies were laid by Ivan Franko in the preceding year. In this case, too, reflection on cultural impact was a major element. At the end of the 19th century and at the beginning of the following one, comparative research of Ukrainian culture was used to prove its ideological indebtedness to Polish or Russian culture (Budnyj and Ilnyčkyj 34). This is what Poles, Russians and sometimes Ukrainians did. Seeking relations between Ukrainian legacy and Russian or Polish culture treated Ukrainian culture as a second-hand, or even as a "tainted" version of the influencing culture. As Budnyj and Ilnyčkyj observe, Franko revalued the influencing–influenced relation (34–35). While he addressed the question of folklore studies, his remarks are both universal and innovative. Franko developed with a three-layer concept of influence: the first one is the layer of material (a pan-European legacy), the second one is composition, arising from the adaptation of foreign elements, to be combined, mixed and reformulated. The third stratum is the authors' individual approach to what is "adopted and mixed"¹. Comparing this concept with observations by Hostinský and Mukařovský as well as with the comparative approach developed after Wellek's rebellion in 1959, we notice how similar the ideas and considerations are. American Comparative Studies, a rival of the French school, pointed out that similarities exist next to differences and that it is the latter that should be the prime

¹ Franko's concept was described in a text *Starynna romano-germanśka nowela w ustach ruśkoho narodu*. Moreover, he included many interesting observations in the article "Adam Mickewycz w ukrajinskij literaturi" (1885). Identifying Frank's approach to Mickiewicz only with the pamphlet *Poet of Betrayal* (1897) is a simplification; an earlier text shows Mickiewicz's poetry as a major model for Ukrainian literature and an object of transformations and cultural games rather than slavish imitation. This is what Franko wrote about the first translation of Mickiewicz into Ukrainian (Huľak-Artemowski 1837): "[...] the author wanted to add to Polish ballades, when possible, a Ukrainian tinge, enliven them with Ukrainian humour, which he fully managed" (Budnyj and Ilnyčkyj 385–386).

focus of research. It is the difference, or what arises from “mediated influence”, that Franko had highlighted in 1883, i.e. 76 years earlier.

Franko’s views were influenced by Mychailo Drahomanov (1841–1895), a Ukrainian political thinker, a European who freely drew on the intellectual legacy of nearly the entire continent. A polyglot, in his early youth he was able to read in five European languages on top of his knowledge of Slavic languages and Latin. His political views were, according to Ivan Lysiak Rudnytsky (Rudnyćkyj), syncretic (Rudnytsky 205), but he also stressed that key for the development of Ukrainian culture is to overcome the anxiety of influence. Drahomanov warned against the exclusive enclosure within one’s own, allegedly “national” formation. He wrote that 2–3 in 100 Ukrainian intellectuals read European books, mainly technical texts at that (Drahomanov 1915, 64). This did not bode well for the development of Ukrainian legacy. Still more controversial seemed his opinions on the attitude to Russian culture, which earned him the tag of a Russophile. However, Drahomanov’s warning against an overt severance of connections with Russian literature by Ukrainian writers stemmed from a pragmatic rather than an ideological position. He did not write about the historical union of both nations but stressed the need to modernise one’s own legacy in contact with a superior culture. As Drahomanov observed, if he saw strenuous efforts of Ukrainian writers to receive “spiritual food” directly from Western cultures, then he would not raise the issue. However, Ukrainian elites lacked sufficient European education for that (Drahomanow 1915, 65). According to him, without external support Ukrainian culture was bound to become provincial.

Drahomanov stressed that the difference between Ukraine and Russia was due to Ukraine having strong cultural ties with Western Europe until the 18th century and to Ukraine’s participation in Western social and cultural processes. The Ukrainian thinker attached great importance to this tradition. However, although relations with the West were mediated by the Polish Republic, this did not mean an uncritical praise of Polish culture. His approach was ambivalent and often scathing. This is one proof that the East-West alternative, in the context of which Comparative Studies of Slav countries has often been placed, is oversimplified. Comparative texts by Ukrainian researchers, recognised as Occidentalists (M. Daszkevych, I. Franko, V. Shchurat, O. Kolessa) were critical of Polish culture, the closest

“window on the West”. It was a framework of references and comparisons as well as negation of many Polish cultural values, imagery, rhetorical figures, and last but not least, the perception of history.

A similar ambivalence towards the West, in the attitudes of followers of this direction of cultural references, can be identified in Polish and Czech texts on cultural impact. That is why the Slavic connections with Western Europe cannot be precisely described via the rigid division into the Occidentalists and the traditionalists mistrustful towards Europe². Occidentalism may have determined the choice of the cultural horizon, which was not, however, tantamount to the recognition of the “influencing” culture as an undisputable model.

Drahomanov raised one more aspect of cultural impact: the denationalisation of Ukrainian elites, who adopted the Polish or Russian cultural model, and ultimately also the respective identity. At Drahomanov’s time, this problem mainly involved the intelligentsia. The Ukrainian thinker defined this phenomenon as the “nomadism of the educated” (after: Rudnytsky 237) and sounded an alarm that only 5% of the intellectuals identify with the nation and assume the role of spiritual leaders (Rudnytsky 236). He asked rhetorically what would happen to the legacy of the French if their elites chose a different cultural and national identity: what would happen within a short time to French literature, political reflection and other achievements? (Rudnytsky 236).

The question of cultural impact was also interesting for Polish comparative scholars, even if Slavophilia was associated with ideology in the Second Republic. The Polish tradition of Slavophilia, including the foundations laid by Mickiewicz’s lectures, gave way to fears of Panslavism. There were few Polish followers of the creation of a “comparative Slavic literature”, a project which fascinated the Czechs and Southern Slavs. Even in the 19th c., when Poles tried to write a history of world literature, they did not single out a separate history of Slavic literatures. Polish literature was put in the context of Western European letters and of Antiquity. The prime focus of re-

² For example: Czech literary scholars found the context for their own literature in Paris, Rome, Vienna, Berlin, and Moscow, which did not preclude their critique of or polemical attitude to the above contexts. Historians were interested in a narrower context: German, Austrian, and in time also the Polish one. However, as Jiří Pešek observes, Czech historiography was predominantly focused on Czech history. Thinking in supra-national or even supra-regional terms was rare in Academia (after: Pešek 145, 147).

search was the French, German, English, and Italian influences, and if relations with Slavic cultures (e.g. Czech or Slovak) were examined, it was done so only from the point of view their impact on Polish culture.

Still more difficult, as strictly political, were cultural relations and the question of the influence of Russian or Ukrainian literature.

Edward Możejko, outlining the status of Polish Comparative Studies before World War II, mentioned “[...] Zygmunt Łempicki, (although he was decisively against the notion of comparative Slavic literatures)”. According to Możejko, the continuators of Comparative Studies after the war included Mieczysław Brahmer and Maria Strzałkowa (Możejko 20). It seems important that the author focuses solely on scholars who sought contexts for Polish culture in West European cultures. What about the East, one might ask? Should not have Możejko mentioned Marian Zdziechowski next to Łempicki, a German and Classical Studies scholar? Zdziechowski was as much a comparatist as Łempicki, but examined mainly Polish-Russian cultural relations. The short-shrift given to Zdziechowski shows that today, too, we may find it hard to cope with a thinker who titled his texts: *Wpływy rosyjskie na duszę polską* [Russian influences on the Polish soul] (1920), or *Europa, Rosja, Azja a idea słowiańska w Polsce* [Europe, Russia, Asia and the Slavic idea in Poland] (1923). It is not easy to look into these questions in a country where most know the poem – “Kto powiedział, że Moskale/ Przyjaciółmi są Lechitów/ Temu pierwszy w łeb wypalę/ Przed kościołem Karmelitów” [Who maintains that Muscovites are Poles’ friends will be killed by me in front of the Carmelite Church]³.

Relations with Ukrainian culture posed an even greater challenge. Those who did not wish to reiterate slogans about the charm of Polish culture, which led to the voluntary Polonisation of the Russian and then Ukrainian elites, had to address questions difficult from the cultural and political perspective. Polish impact on Ukrainian culture, no doubt profound, was neither decidedly positive, nor destructive. It was, however, subject to ideological interpretation on either side. To date, it has not been fully studied in its complexity and ambivalence. This might be work for whole generations, especially that it calls for the rejection of many representations ingrained in the Polish

³ Words from the poem *Kościuszko's Polonaise* by Rajnold Suchodolski.

consciousness. However, the benefits of today's modernised Comparative Studies help us see our own and other cultures in their dynamic rather than static contexts. The category of cultural impact, as a question of utmost significance in Central and Eastern Europe, is a perfect tool for the creation of a renewed vision of this region.

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