

“To look darkness. To subside”:

From Micropoetics to Micropolitics and Back Again (On Method)

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Microscopy: the Experience of Seeing

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

Gilles Deleuze on the composition of *A Thousand Plateaus*¹

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

⁴ Unkiewicz, *Podróże...*, p. 12.

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

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

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

Micrology: Theory of Oversights

Orpheus can do anything except look this “point” in the face, look at the centre of the night in the night.

M. Blanchot⁶

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

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

⁵ Ibid., p. 3.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

¹³J. Brach-Czajna, *Szczeliny istnienia*, Warszawa 1992.

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

¹⁵Domańska, *Mikrohistorie*, p. 63.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

This road leads through Theodor W. Adorno and Walter Benjamin all the way back to the German Romantics, to Schlegel, Novalis and Franz Schubert. The poetics of the fragment bears witness to the fragility of existence, the love for collecting small objects, a kind of passion for knick-knacks, it pays tribute to the Angel of History, saving the crumbs that settle, the material traces left by operations of the human spirit (that was in fact the accent of Nawarecki's first "micrological" work, on the imagination and objects of the Skamander poets²⁴). A minor change of perspective in the foreword to the final volume of *Mikrologie* from 2005 pushes this venerable procession of authoritative masters into the shadows, however, and the essay concentrates, exactly like Sulima's, on the scholar himself, on the microfiber washcloth he is holding, on the order of everyday life, and forces us to ask the question "What kind of washcloth is that?"²⁵ This is no longer a space of reflection on literature, but an exercise in the anthropology of small things, "small stories," at the intersection of texts and cultural practices.

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

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

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

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

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

²⁶Czapliński, p. 10.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

²⁹*Ibid.*

³⁰*Ibid.*, p. 56.

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

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

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

Micronautics: (in)sight

Since we've all insisted on being dumbfounded, I have
been sent to manifest that to the nation.

Konrad Góra, Wrocław³³

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

1

Drzewo – ślad. Roślinny złom.
Wstyd o brak drzazgi. Jeszcze

1

Nikt nie oślepił od
odwracania wzroku [...] ³⁴

(A tree – a trace. Vegetable salvage. / Shame at the lack of splinters. Still / None have gone blind
from / turning their sight [...].)

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

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

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

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

³⁵Czapliński, *Mikrologi*, p. 9.

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

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

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

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

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

Microphysics: the Division of Power (Over the Body)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Micropolitics: Freed Molecules

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

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

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

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

⁴⁸J. Derrida, *Mémoires d'aveugle*, Paris 1999. Quoted in: Momro, *Widmontologie...*, p. 17.

⁴⁹Ibid.

⁵⁰G. Deleuze, F. Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, trans. Brian Massumi, London 1987, p. 218.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

⁵⁵Deleuze, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 73.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

[N, 9]

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

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

⁵⁷Deleuze, *Essays Critical and Clinical*, p. 1.

⁵⁸Deleuze, *A Thousand Plateaus*, pp. 4–5.

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

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

Szczelina, / przejście, zaognienie [Crack, / transition, inflammation; N, 47];

Sęk. Przejście do / potęgi [Knag. Passage to / power; N, 121];

Paniczne // przejście w/ stan spoczynku [Panicked / shift into / a state of rest; N, 125];

przejściowe / gwarancje węgla [Transitional / guarantees of coal; N, 72];

Odprysk, // przejście mrozu w/ pieszczotę [Splinter, / passing of frost into / caress; N, 79].

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

Micropoetics: Connections

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

⁶⁴T. Sławek, *U-bywać. Człowiek, świat i przyjaźń w twórczości Williama Blake’a* (Sub-siding. Man, the World and Friendship in the Works of William Blake), Katowice 2001, p. 252.

⁶⁵Tamże, pp. 25–252.

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

Konrad Góra: I took a poetic technique from Bly that could somehow be married to divesting from yourself and simultaneously with the non-preponderance of existences over necessity [...] I had the most memorable experience with that method in Poznań, where I got a work-room in the basement of the od:Zysk [squat]; I sat there as far down as you can go, in the middle of the [ground beneath the] town square, in darkness, and the only thing that could happen there – besides the fact that I eavesdropped on the people walking over me, and found it to be an event when somebody went silent, because that is an event, since in fact people are talking all the time – there was a rat, reddish-haired, I called him Kaiser, and he came out to where I was every once in a while, in the end we finally had a lasting bond, I brought him bread and peppermints [...]. I thought that I had driven him away from od:Zysk, because I knew they would come in there with exterminators, but the day before yesterday Łojek from that crew told me that Jezus, one of the dogs there had killed the rat.

Dawid Mateusz: So it's quite a time-consuming method and one that doesn't operate without claiming its victims.

Konrad Góra: It opens up to more than it closes off⁶⁶

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

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

KEYWORDS

KONRAD GÓRA

literary micrology

ABSTRACT:

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

Polish poetry after the year 2000

micronautics

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