

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

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

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

inspired by texts, images and other cultural artifacts.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

¹⁰ Yates, 4.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

translated by Małgorzata Olsza

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KEYWORDS

memory

PSYCHOANALYSIS

ABSTRACT:

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

Zygmunt Haupt

PSYCHOTOPOGRAPHY

the spatial turn

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