

Quasi-journals as a laboratory – the case of Andrzej Falkiewicz

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“(Let’s say that honestly here, in this place, at this moment)”

“I cut like a diamond through disciplines, compartments, and classifications”¹ – states Andrzej Falkiewicz in *Takim ścięciem* [Using that stitch]. Indeed, the works by this critic, essayist, and author, who passed away in 2010, is difficult to classify as one specific genre, trend, or topic. Perhaps we should take a marginal position, and instead of focusing on the central *Ledwie mrok* [Hardly darkness] (an essayist epistolary novel which some critics consider to be Falkiewicz’s peculiar *opus magnum*²), we should take a closer look at his other works, which are more private and rarely analyzed.

Therefore, the aim of this paper is to analyze three books by Falkiewicz: *Fragmety o polskiej literaturze* [Fragments on Polish literature], *Takim ścięciem* [Using that stitch] and *Ta chwila* [That moment]. Although it is not obvious which genre these books belong to, for the purpose of this paper I define them as quasi-journals. First of all, the notion of a journal has been a significant

¹ Andrzej Falkiewicz, *Takim ścięciem*. Zapisy z lat 1974–1976, przepisane w 1986, przeczytane w 2008 roku [Using that stitch. Notes from the years 1974–1976, rewritten in 1986, reread in 2008 (Wrocław: Biuro Literackie, 2009), 7.

² The phrase “peculiar opus magnum” reflects the way *Ledwie mrok* is written about. According to researchers, Falkiewicz’s only novel is both his “failure in terms of literature”, and “greatest achievement” (Andrzej Skrendo, “Czytanie Falkiewicza. Prolegomena” [Reading Falkiewicz. Prolegomenon], in: *Nie przeczytane* [Not read], edited by Jarosław Borowiec, Tomasz Mizerkiewicz [Wrocław: Oficyna Wydawnicza ATUT – Wrocławskie Wydawnictwo Oświatowe, 2014], 38), an attempt at “creating an alternative language of new humanities” (Karol Maliszewski, *Mój Falkiewicz* [My Falkiewicz], <https://www.biuroliterackie.pl/biblioteka/recenzje/moj-falkiewicz/>, date of access: 2.02.2023), which sounds “extravagant or pretentious” (Skrendo). Nonetheless, such ambivalent opinions do not change the fact that “*Ledwie mrok* has a unique place in Falkiewicz’s works” (Skrendo).

reference point for scholars writing about those texts. For example, Marta Koronkiewicz observes that “*Takim ściegiem* gives an impression of a coherent, intimate journal – not just due to the reader’s effort and will”³, whereas Jakub Skurtys claims that “*Takim ściegiem* and *Ta Chwila* are two quasi-journals, full of intimate confessions and erudite considerations, governed by rationality, authenticity, and poetry”⁴. Secondly, the texts in question match Philippe Lejeune’s definition: “a diary is a series of dated traces”⁵ – indeed, dates play an important role in them, to a greater or lesser extent. In *Fragmenty o polskiej literaturze* text modules are organized either by titles, or by dates; the subtitle of *Takim ściegiem* reads “notes from the years 1974–1976, rewritten in 1986”, *Ta chwila* opens with a date (30th October 1961), and the book concludes with the date of death: “That moment of writing started for the Author in January 2006, and ended in June 2010 – one month before his death. Andrzej died on 22nd July 2010”⁶. Therefore, Lejeune’s claim that the date seems to be of utmost importance⁷ is significant in reference to the analyzed texts. Another conclusion by Lejeune – that apart from text, also an image, an object, or some private holy thing⁸ – allows to observe how the traces left by Falkiewicz in quasi-journals changed over time. *Fragmenty o polskiej literaturze* are completely rooted in text (although his experiments with punctuation and tables already slowly begin to attract attention); in *Takim ściegiem* graphs and more complex punctuation solutions appear; and in *Ta chwila* visual elements (such as photographs, postcards, plans, leaflets, partiture, scans of hand-written notes, collages) are at least as significant as the text, which also undergoes an evolution as a result of experimenting with various possibilities offered by text editors. Although research-wise, *Ta chwila* it is a more interesting text than *Fragmenty o polskiej literaturze* due to its formal devices, we should not create a linear narrative illustrating how Falkiewicz’s project developed. Again, as Lejeune advises, we should rather notice that perhaps a diary is a story, but first and foremost, it is music, the art of repetition and variation⁹. This thesis seems especially significant in the case of Falkiewicz, not only because sound metaphors play an important role in the auto-descriptions of his works (“Ledwie mrok is an Allegro for prepared computer and dynamized harpsichord”¹⁰), but also because the rule of variation and repetition describes relationships between different texts. For example, one text module in *Fragmenty o polskiej literaturze* contains a fragment which could belong to *Ledwie mrok* (such as the text *Trzeba mieć ciało* [Having a body is necessary]). In *Takim ściegiem* (see e.g. pp. 84–85) traces of work on that novel can be found (e.g. an outlined idea on page 174), and in *Ta chwila* – of renewing and republishing *Takim ściegiem*. At the same time when Falkiewicz was working on *Ta chwila*, he published *Znalezione* [Found], where he reprinted an essay from *Fragmenty o polskiej literaturze*. Additionally, in *Ta chwila* there are fragments interpreting *Ledwie mrok*, *Świetliste* [Luminous] and

³ Marta Koronkiewicz, “Uniemożliwić średniość. Strategie pisarskie w «Takim ściegiem»” [Making mediocrity impossible. Literary strategies in «Using that stitch», in: *Nie przeczytane*, 113.

⁴ Jakub Skurtys, “Niepoliczalne Jest” [It is uncountable], in: Andrzej Falkiewicz, *Jeden i liczba mnoga* [One and the plural], 2nd edition (Wrocław: Oficyna Wydawnicza ATUT – Wrocławskie Wydawnictwo Oświatowe, 2016), 4.

⁵ Philippe Lejeune, “Koronka. Dziennik jako seria datowanych śladów” [A diary as a series of dated traces], translated into Polish by Magda and Paweł Rodak, *Pamiętnik Literacki* 4 (2006), 21.

⁶ Andrzej Falkiewicz, *Ta chwila* (Wrocław: Biuro Literackie, 2013), 446.

⁷ Lejeune, 21.

⁸ Lejeune.

⁹ Lejeune.

¹⁰ Falkiewicz, *Ta chwila*, 89.

*Takim ściegiem*¹¹. The last publication has been republished with a different subtitle: “notes from the years 1974-1976, rewritten in 1986, **reread in 2008**” (highlight mine – D.K.), and a few but significant changes in contents. The same book also contains fragments of the unpublished *W trybie pragnienia* [In longing mode], which... were published in *Jeden i liczba mnoga*.

The relationships between Falkiewicz’s works listed above are only a modest part of all the possible combinations, but perhaps they reveal at least some pathways through the density of texts, and justify the analysis of quasi-journals. However, at the same time I believe that *Fragmenty o polskiej literaturze*, *Takim ściegiem* and *Ta chwila* require interpretation not only in the context of their relationships with other works by Falkiewicz, but also as individual artistic endeavors. So what is the experiment conducted in the quasi-journals about, and was it successful?

Piotr Bogalecki’s concept of “c(i)łopisanie”¹² can be a good starting point for considerations regarding Falkiewicz’s works. In simple words, this neologism reflects how the body [ciało] and the Whole [Całość] interact in Falkiewicz’s works. Let us begin with considering what happens with those spheres in the quasi-journals.

The author’s body

Falkiewicz wrote in *Takim ściegiem*: “And I – I am. For the reader, one thing is beyond doubt: these notes all take place in the author’s body and soul”¹³, later adding that “To be more protein than culture – this is all an artist has to do. Their attitude to people is the substance of their art”¹⁴. Therefore, in the space of quasi-journals, the body is the author’s body, and the author’s privacy is the foundation of the creative process¹⁵. This idea returns in Falkiewicz’s evaluation of other authors. For example, he wrote about Jerzy Pluta:

Either way, first the author’s privacy. If there is any. Because if there is not, neither an absolute ear for language, nor excellent proficiency in writing, nor persistent avant-garde experiments will save the work from oblivion. After some short period of interest or admiration for means of expression, only intimate traces of personality are left from cultural sifting. It is not important “how it is done” – in

¹¹This is by no means a complete list of relationships between Falkiewicz’s texts. Skurtys and Skrendo found interesting relationships between different texts (see Skurtys and Andrzej Skrendo, “Stanisław Brzozowski i Andrzej Falkiewicz – fragmenty o powinowactwie” [Stanisław Brzozowski and Andrzej Falkiewicz – fragments on affinity], in: Stanisław Brzozowski – (ko)repetycje [Stanisław Brzozowski – (co)repetitions, vol. 2, edited by Tomasz Mizerkiewicz, Andrzej Skrendo, Krzysztof Uniłowski [Katowice: FA-art, 2013]). However, their findings do not exhaust the topic, which requires additional research.

¹²See Piotr Bogalecki, “«Powiedział mi się Bóg». Andrzej Falkiewicz w perspektywie postsekularnej” [God told himself to me. Andrzej Falkiewicz from the postsecular perspective], in: *Nie przeczytane*, 261.

¹³Falkiewicz, *Takim ściegiem*, 226.

¹⁴Falkiewicz, *Takim ściegiem*.

¹⁵In a broader, more philosophical sense, the author’s body is the necessary connector between the whole and a part: “Probably a “segmenting” experience taking place in the external world is accompanied by my internal, “unifying” experience, taking place via external senses which I use – likely through contact with me-body, my internal body – to get in touch with reality in some fundamentally different way. Probably – through my own living organism, its desires and anxieties – I reach “the world’s life”, to the desires and anxieties of being (but across the five hundred pages of my *Ledwie mrok* I was unable to tell this myself in a comprehensible way)”. See Andrzej Falkiewicz, *Być może* [Perhaps] (Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo Słowo/Obraz Terytoria, 2002), 38. A more detailed analysis of the relations within the part – body – whole system is beyond the scope of this paper.

terms of linguistics, postmodernism, in line with current fashion, not in line with it, or against it. The only thing that matters is the strong, varied relationship of the author with their work. Literature is playing an internal instrument, which every reader has inside them – but it is possible only on condition that the author uses their own instrument. Because ultimately, what a person seeks in literature is the author’s testament contained within it. This is what readers will find – the author. They are the form and contents of a literary work. They are sought in catalogues and dusty library shelves.

And so the author’s privacy – elementary, undivided, undefined. As much as one person should and can communicate about themselves to others¹⁶.

Therefore, it is unsurprising that Falkiewicz equipped his quasi-journals in – as Sergiusz Sterna-Wachowiak put it in an interview with him – “your gut prose, in order to show what you expect from Polish literature, forever immature and constantly dishonest. Like in laboratory preparations”¹⁷. The three texts analyzed here constitute the essence of literary honesty produced in a laboratory of personal experiment, not an intimate journal, but rather – as observed by Małgorzata Koronkiewicz, “a journal of experimenting with intimacy”¹⁸. And this begs the question: how do “extreme honesty” and “exhibitionism”, “auto-vivisections” impact readers?

The characteristic rhetoric used to write about Falkiewicz’s works may shed some light. Jakub Skurtys describes Falkiewicz’s works as “an equivalent of a real conversation, as if the reader entered in the middle of it and slowly tried to understand what they heard”¹⁹, whereas Koronkiewicz observes that *Takim ściegiem* “is a unique opportunity to peek behind the scenes”²⁰. Therefore, the reader plays an active part – the author’s radical privacy is connected to the reader’s radical engagement. This is especially evident in Janusz Drzewucki’s review of *Takim ściegiem*:

If it is easier to say what Falkiewicz’s book is not than what it is, any style of reception is acceptable. Moreover, *Takim ściegiem* actually forces readers to choose their own way of reading²¹.

The rhetorical contradiction of this fragment (the choice implying freedom and coercion suggesting its deficiency) shows what Falkiewicz’s strategy does to readers. The honesty of quasi-journals, stressed multiple times, forces readers into a sort of a game. Conversing with the author, having a look behind the scenes, participating in work in progress are all possible, because the author uncovers himself in front of readers, with his advantages and disadvantages. The body of the living author is the only means of reaching the Whole. We can recognize it only by noticing the relationships between repeated variations of fragments. In this sense Falkiewicz’s work would be about (over)presence of what Małgorzata Czermińska calls “an autobiographical attitude”²², and

¹⁶Andrzej Falkiewicz, *Cztery szkice* [Four sketches] (Wrocław: Wrocławskie Wydawnictwo Warstwy, 2014), 61.

¹⁷Sergiusz Sterna-Wachowiak, “«To nie jest kultura to jest żywe białko»” [This is not culture, this is living protein], in: *Nie przeczytane*, 342.

¹⁸Koronkiewicz, 113.

¹⁹Skurtys, 6.

²⁰Koronkiewicz, 113.

²¹Janusz Drzewucki, “Kretyństwo i mądrość, czyli «stan ciałoducha»” [Idiocy and wisdom, i.e. the state of bodyspirit], *Twórczość 3* (1992): 116.

²²Małgorzata Czermińska, *Autobiograficzny trójkąt* [Autobiographical triangle] (Kraków: Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych Universitas, 2020), 8.

so in order to understand it, “socially functioning knowledge about the author obtained from beyond a given text”²³ is necessary.

In order to capture the relationship between losing one’s vision and the difficulties walking (crucial in *Ledwie mrok* and *Świetliste*), and the ability to think, one needs to know the story about a girl met in a military hospital, described (among others) in *Ta chwila*, which the author reminisces over numerous times²⁴. In order to comprehend some of the experimental notes from *Fragmenty o polskiej literaturze*, written using feminine inflectional endings, clearly different from the critical-interpretative sketches which the book mostly consists of, one needs to read *Ledwie mrok*. Without knowledge about the planned novel, linguistic and topographic solutions from other texts may seem completely out of place. Therefore, in order to understand the function of fragments of one of Falkiewicz’s work, one needs to have a good knowledge of all his texts, and the ability to hear the constantly developed and transformed motifs which comprise them. Regardless of the stitch selected by the reader, they must be aware of the tangle of references, often very personal.

In this sense the first sentence of a review of *Takim ściegiem* by Piotr Skórzyński is unfortunate: “Andrzej Falkiewicz, once an original critic and essayist, decided to publish his private notes”²⁵ – because the autobiographic element had functioned in Falkiewicz’s texts long before that. At the time when subsequent quasi-journals were published, the function of this element in text changes. In my opinion, neither the fact that Falkiewicz presents himself in the context of the external world, nor that he describes his own internal feelings is the most significant here, but the fact that he invites readers to what seems to be his private sphere; he does not just invite to talk to him, he actually “forces to choose one’s own stitch of reading”. In reference to Czermińska’s idea from *Autobiograficzny trójkąt*, it can be noticed that Falkiewicz’s texts are dominated by a challenge²⁶ rather than by a testament or confession, which is “a provocation addressed at the reader”²⁷. Falkiewicz invites us to play a game under the supervision of “Karpo”, “Buczko”, “Gombro” and sometimes “Ró” accompanies “K”, this place is, among others, “ta ście”, the Whole is the stake, and the ability to decipher those and other abbreviations, dependencies, and references in a specific way, defined by the author – the condition to enter the game.

The intended Whole (by the author)

Andrzej Falkiewicz writes in his essay *Nie-przeczytane*: the path walked by the author needs to be walked by the reader, even more attentively in order to understand each word, notion, image. To understand correctly – i.e. how the author meant them to be understood (the understanding they arrived at in the formulation process). To understand correctly – i.e. from the perspective of the whole to which a given part

²³Czermińska, 9.

²⁴“This scene returned to me in the 1990s, and it was reflected, considered, constructed in terms of the plot, experimentally tested in the 2000s, which led to the creation of a previously unpublished novel-poem *Świetliste*” (Andrzej Falkiewicz, *Świetliste* [Wrocław: Biuro Literackie, 2011], 89).

²⁵Piotr Skórzyński, “Popruty ścieg” [Ripped stitch], *Nowe Książki* 4 (1992): 33.

²⁶In the autobiographical triangle Witold Gombrowicz – one of the most important authors for Falkiewicz – is the patron of the challenge attitude. A comparative analysis of journal practices of these two authors would require a separate study.

²⁷Czermińska, 9.

belongs. This is how I understand reading, and I believe that the most representative, the most eloquently appreciated works of thought and art have not been read like this, they have not been understood²⁸.

In the context of this fragment it turns out that the reader does not need to make a choice regarding the way of reading; instead, there is only one correct choice: the author's, in whose footsteps we need to follow. The whole intended by the author is the destination. However, here we are faced with another aporia, i.e. Falkiewicz's tips cited above come from a text about the impossibility of both reading and making whole from the book *Fragmenty o polskiej literaturze*, whereas the other quasi-journals are divided into loosely connected paragraphs. In *Ta chwila* Falkiewicz comments on such a composition: "(ATTENTION! SHORTER SENTENCES! Convenient for the reader – having a glance, they can immediately decide whether they want to read a given fragment)"²⁹. How should the tension between the desired whole and realized fragment be understood? It seems that this binary opposition should be supplemented by one more significant element – the notion of a collection: "one manifestation (of this fragmentariness which unsuccessfully strives towards the whole) is collecting"³⁰. A similar declaration can be found in *Ta chwila*:

A moment is the protagonist of this book. In other words: the momentariness of a moment is the protagonist. This is the reason for the great number of digressions, illustrations. This abundance of snapshots, fleeting images. My personal doodles, nonsensicalities, and the scrupulous collector's factography transpiring from them [...]. I collect through writing³¹.

Quasi-journals (especially *Ta chwila*) are thus a mixture of everything: philosophy with physiology, footnotes to unwritten books with a recipe for potato soup. It may be then assumed that Falkiewicz pushes his experiments with polyphony, discontinuity, and using the visual layer symbolically the furthest in the space of personal writing; that we are dealing with a journal which constitutes – as Paweł Rodak put it – "a laboratory of creative work", i.e. a place:

where fragments of potential, started, planned literary texts are noted down ad hoc. In extreme cases, daily journaling can become daily literary production, where the distance between personal and literary notes will gradually diminish, and then completely disappear³².

However, I believe that this understanding of the collecting strategy does not give it justice. Although Falkiewicz's works are generally a space of "snippets from many cultures, languages, environments"³³ colliding with each other, contrary to appearances, collecting is not about combining as many idioms and dictionaries as possible, in order to artistically take advantage of the resulting dissonances – although the collage structure of the quasi-journals makes this interpretation possible. However, I would like to stress that this understanding of the strategy would be opposite to how Falkiewicz

²⁸Andrzej Falkiewicz, *Fragmenty o polskiej literaturze* (Warszawa: Czytelnik, 1982), 271.

²⁹Falkiewicz, *Ta chwila*, 13.

³⁰Falkiewicz, *Fragmenty o polskiej literaturze*, 277.

³¹Falkiewicz, *Ta chwila*, 21.

³²Paweł Rodak, "Dziennik pisarza: między codzienną praktyką piśmienną a literaturą" [A writer's journal: between everyday writing practice and literature], *Pamiętnik Literacki* 4 (2006): 41.

³³Karol Maliszewski, "O «rozpiętości wyrazowej człowieka» – «Ledwie mrok» Andrzeja Falkiewicza" [On «people's lexical range» – «Ledwie mrok» by Andrzej Falkiewicz, in: *Nie przeczytane*, 136.

conceptualized the idea of a collection, which is first and foremost based on (often failed) attempts at organizing. His fear of entropy is especially evident in *Esej na Boże Narodzenie* [A Christmas Day essay], which opens with a story about a trip for a unique postage stamp, and considerations regarding a collecting mania, in part inherited from his father (there are many fragments about collecting and Falkiewicz's social class in *Ta chwila*). However, to me the fact that he states openly in that essay that motivations behind collecting and creating are very similar, is the most interesting:

a collector tries to gain control over growing entropy. They are motivated by resisting entropy, and the fear of the collection becoming dispersed is the fear of own energy becoming dispersed. There is only one motif of action, the same in collecting and writing essays³⁴.

And so the motivation is to try to control chaos. If we read into the already cited essay *Nieprzeczytane* from *Fragmenty o polskiej literaturze*, we will see that the organizing gesture completely replaces reading.

We do not read and we do not watch. So what do we do? We organize. Everything is constantly organized anew, always differently. Each fragment “refers” to another one, but before they make the (whole) text, this (text) “refers” to other (texts), and those texts – to some other, which I cannot get to know – hence it refers me to myself, it returns me to my always incomplete unrelated (convictions), which I, hopeful, pass on to others; which I always “refer” to someone else: a friend will watch, a friend will read and put together (a text), a friend will deliver (me). But this is it: he will not read, he will not deliver³⁵.

I find this fragment interesting for a few reasons. After almost thirty years, Falkiewicz decided to reprint it in *Znalezione* [Found], with a foreword: “I read selected fragments more carefully, and later restructured them and placed them here”³⁶. I believe that this gesture reveals something significant about Falkiewicz's attitude to creating; he constantly proofreads, restructures, reorganizes his work. *Takim ściegiem* is a great example of that; already the title suggests restructuring, which contradicts the spontaneity of journal entries. Lejeune wrote clearly that:

a diary should not be corrected *post factum*. When the clock strikes midnight, everything must remain as it was. The value of a diary is precisely about it being a trace of a moment. If I correct yesterday's entry, instead of adding something new to my diary – I kill it. Retouches are forbidden, like with watercolors painting³⁷.

Meanwhile *Takim ściegiem* are “notes from the years 1974-1976, rewritten in 1986”, which were later “reread in 2009”, re-selected, supplemented with Errata I, which was supplemented with its own Errata II. Falkiewicz keeps trying to complete, add, but no additional text is finite, and each addition creates the need for more additions. Moreover, systematizing does not lead to organization. To the contrary, as Falkiewicz himself put it in *Być może*, he “further complicates by trying to

³⁴Andrzej Falkiewicz, *Teatr, społeczeństwo* [Theater, society] (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich. Wydaw., 1980), 242.

³⁵Falkiewicz, *Fragmenty o polskiej literaturze*, 278.

³⁶Andrzej Falkiewicz, *Znalezione* (Wrocław: Oficyna Wydawnicza Atut – Wrocławskie Wydawnictwo Oświatowe, 2009), 115.

³⁷Lejeune, 24.

organize”³⁸. Constant corrections lead to a given text having numerous versions dispersed across different books, all referring to each other, thus creating a thick textual network. How to find a way through it? In his analysis of works by Ewa Kuryluk, Maciej Mazur observes that she “does not write about herself – she writes herself, complicating the difference between the person speaking and the person spoken. Where should we seek real identity? On margins, in the linguistic order (lapses, omissions)”³⁹. Let us return to Falkiewicz’s thoughts on organizing, especially its second part:

it refers me to myself, it returns me to my always incomplete unrelated (convictions), which I, full of hope, pass on to others; which I always “refer” to someone else: a friend will watch, a friend will read and put together (a text), a friend will deliver (me). But this is it: he will not read, he will not deliver⁴⁰.

The referring relationship is self-referential: it refers me to myself. And when it seems that there is some space for the other, or even a necessity to refer to something external, it turns out that it is not true. In reality, as Koronkiewicz observes, “the reader is constantly being erased, they receive a text which was long ago sentenced to not-reading – therefore they are a reader «in spite of everything», whereas the author keeps showing them where to charge”⁴¹. Falkiewicz pretends to completely uncover himself, however, on closer inspection it is revealed that composition-wise we are dealing with an accumulation of emphasis, ellipses, and a surplus of pronouns whose function is to conceal rather than reveal. This way of composition is visible in the titles. *Takim ścięciem* [Using that stitch], i.e. what stitch? *Ta chwila* [That moment], i.e. which one? Pronouns replace words necessary for describing objects, but do not actually mean anything in themselves. The autothematic fragment of *Takim ścięciem* is especially interesting from this perspective: “each day those notes are resembling more and more... oh, What Not”⁴² – this could mean anything.

However, at the same time Falkiewicz is impossible to be read, because he had already been read by himself. Attempts at saying and organizing the same thing, explaining his own texts and excusing himself for his texts all leave little to read. It is significant that Falkiewicz is so reluctant to discuss Błoński’s writing strategy in *Fragmenty o polskiej literaturze*:

I have promised myself so many times to read what he wrote carefully, and I gave up after the first few pages feeling that my participation was superfluous, because everything there had already been thought through and told without me, and what is more, topped with a good-hearted face whose only purpose was to intimidate me⁴³.

Falkiewicz treats his readers in a similar way. He seems to be offering an exciting perspective, he pulls readers into his private space (in quasi-journals) or intimate correspondence between protagonists (in novels). However, in fact readers have access only to comments about texts rather than to those texts.

³⁸Falkiewicz, *Być może* [Maybe], 74.

³⁹Maciej Mazur, “Encyklopedierotytk jako (auto)biofikcja Ewa Kuryluk a Roland Barthes” [Encyclopedia-periodical as (auto)biofiction. Ewa Kuryluk and Roland Barthes], *Er(r)go* 2 (2021): 190.

⁴⁰Falkiewicz, *Fragmenty o polskiej literaturze*, 278.

⁴¹Koronkiewicz, 119.

⁴²Falkiewicz, *Takim ścięciem*, 110.

⁴³Falkiewicz, *Fragmenty o polskiej literaturze*, 285.

Although the need to get closer to readers is great, it needs to remain unfulfilled. In the novel Falkiewicz seems to be giving voice to a woman, but in reality he speaks through her, and everything the female protagonist says is analyzed by an embittered critic, leaving little space for readers, who typically have nothing to interpret, e.g. when the fictional correspondence is about films which they do not have access to. Falkiewicz also wrote about this process in quasi-journals, providing specific page numbers and explaining his ideas, only to eventually write a double erratum. His interviews indicate that he was aware of too much commentary in his texts:

The reader wants to demolish on their own. The recipient is constructed in such a way. They can feed on a rubble heap they prepared. Unfortunately, this [i.e. *Znaleziony* – D.K.] and my other two books are burdened by my need to share my doubts with readers. Yes, do have your doubts, but allow readers to have their own, because this is where the demolition and completion of the author's judgments take place⁴⁴.

The formula proposed in *Polski kosmos* [Polish cosmos]: “I find myself completely on the other side of the text – the side you read”⁴⁵, outlines the field of readers' freedom rather well. Falkiewicz challenges himself with an impossible task of communicating everything (hence footnotes, additions, Errata I and II etc.) in such a way as to leave nothing to say.

The reader's place is designated also in the subtitle: “notes from the years 1974-1976, rewritten I 1986, **re-read in 2008**” (highlight mine – D.K.). Falkiewicz read himself, re-read himself even – the reader has nothing left to do here. Because this subtitle belongs to the second edition of *Takim ściegiem*, it is tempting to analyze the differences between *Takim ściegiem* unread (first edition) and read (second edition). In the next edition Falkiewicz not only resigned from Errata, but he also did the same thing as with the new edition of *Nie-przeczytany* [Un-read]: he wrote parts of the text with the Wingdings font, which changes letters into different shapes (e.g. symbols for zodiac signs, telephones, envelopes, flags, etc.), which renders the text impossible to read without using a computer⁴⁶.

However, before we translate those fragments, we should consider what changes are introduced by the need to use a computer. Despite declarations regarding private, physical contact with readers, the text is doing everything to distance itself from them. The body is replaced by a symbol, which replaces other symbols, text – by an interpretation, which takes it all even further away from the “protein”⁴⁷, so significant for Falkiewicz, because it functions in the digital space rather than in a manuscript bearing traces of the hand that wrote it. This mediation seems to me especially significant, because it appears in his other works. The protagonist of *Ledwie mrok* communicates with her mentor until she receives a floppy disk with a computer virus, which destroys the novel's text – words disintegrate on our eyes.

The computer is also among key starting points in planning a novel. A note with the idea for *Ledwie mrok* in *Takim ściegiem* contains two construction elements: the protagonist (“some

⁴⁴Jarosław Borowiec, “Autor prywatny” [A private author], in: *Nie przeczytane*, 366.

⁴⁵Andrzej Falkiewicz, *Polski kosmos*, 2nd edition (Wrocław: Agencja Wydawniczo-Reklamowa, 1996), 266.

⁴⁶Krystyna Miłobędzka also explored artistic possibilities of that font around the same time (see Krystyna Miłobędzka, *Wszystkowiersze* [All-poems] [Legnica: Biuro Literackie, 2000]) – a poem written in it turns out to be wiersz głęboki [deep poem] from the same book of poems. Relationships between Falkiewicz's and Miłobędzka's experimental work require a separate analysis.

⁴⁷See e.g. Falkiewicz, *Takim ściegiem*, 226.

rather specific disabled woman⁴⁸) and the tool allowing her to communicate (“A tape recorder? A pencil stuck to her hand? A computer keyboard operated with the left hand?”⁴⁹). For Falkiewicz, solving that issue is essential⁵⁰. Fragments of *Ta chwila* also allow to notice that in terms of his own work, Falkiewicz sees the computer not only as a transparent mechanism, which does not significantly impact the process of thinking about a text, but also as an important instrument which allows edition – e.g. adding new contents⁵¹.

The medium’s opacity results mostly from the fact that for Falkiewicz, the computer is not a handy tool, as evidenced by his comments from *Nie-przeczytane* (“Here are attempts at creating new punctuation marks which either stop the reader, or carry them away. One needs to use the computer with caution one false klick destroys sweeps of text”⁵² and *Ta chwila* (“We are all victims of the modern computer. It confounds us. And us in it, together with it – all mixed up”⁵³), as well as a description of his own experience of working on a book (“yesterday I left the computer nightmare, I was in seventh heaven – and today again, anew, the computer mess. The computer part of my nightmare”⁵⁴). Following Heidegger, the computer’s presence (*Vorhandenheit*) manifests itself in its lack of handiness (*Zuhandenheit*)⁵⁵. How do difficulties using a text editor translate into the practice of writing those personal notes?

The computer seems a dream come true for anyone writing a journal: it allows to write a continuous, endless document – as opposed to traditional notebooks:

It should be possible to write in an endless notebook. As it does not exist, experienced diarists hoard on notebooks to never run out of them. Although stationary notebooks are not endless, information technology is promising. Thanks to the capacity of modern hard drives, I can write my journal in one file, without being faced with the end of the medium⁵⁶.

However, having a tool allowing to continuously write down his experiences at his disposal, Falkiewicz wrote mostly about his difficulties with closing and saving files, and “the nightmare of disconnections”. Those technical difficulties could allow readers to finally take a more active position, encourage them to interact with the text, co-create it. Fragments informing

⁴⁸Falkiewicz, *Takim ściegiem*, 174.

⁴⁹*Takim ściegiem*, 175.

⁵⁰Falkiewicz’s notes about *Ledwie mrok* clearly show that he was mostly interested in his protagonist’s disability. He tries to “map her sensory and sensory-motor disorders” (Falkiewicz, *Takim ściegiem*, 174) and work out “styles of emission” (Falkiewicz, *Takim ściegiem*). It is unimportant who this woman is and what she is like (“some rather specific disabled woman”). The way he writes about her would confirm Koronkiewicz’s diagnosis that “in *Ledwie mrok* – mostly written using feminine forms – rather than give the protagonist voice, the narrative takes it away from her” (see Koronkiewicz, 116).

⁵¹Falkiewicz’s interest in possibilities offered by the computer is also clear in his analyses of Jerzy Pluta’s works. I think it is significant that he interprets fragments describing how Pluta learned to use a text editor, especially that they are preceded by a quote by Marshall McLuhan “The medium is the message. The way of transmission (editing, publishing) is a message” (see Falkiewicz, *Cztery szkice*, 58).

⁵²Falkiewicz, *Znalezione*, 138.

⁵³Falkiewicz, *Ta chwila*, 281.

⁵⁴Falkiewicz, *Ta chwila*, 117.

⁵⁵See Martin Heidegger, *Being and time*, translated into Polish by Bogdan Baran (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 1994), 94–118.

⁵⁶Lejeune, 18.

quasi-journal laboratory there is only one point of arrival – the same as the starting point. Writing more or less the same thing about oneself, only to read, rewrite it, and reread it once again.

translated by Paulina Zagórska

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ABSTRACT:

The aim of this article is to interpret three works by Andrzej Falkiewicz (*Fragmenty o polskiej literaturze*, *Takim ściegiem*, *Ta chwila*), which were not analyzed before. They are referred to as quasi-journals due to their experimental character and intimate tone. The article uses Philippe Lejeune's definition of a diary to show the connection between its musical and variation form and the principle of repetition, which organizes Falkiewicz's works and Małgorzata Czermińska's attitude of challenge idea to present how the reader is pulled into a game by author. An analysis of the texts and the importance of computers in this experiment suggests that quasi-journals require a different approach, pointing out that reader is not as vital in Falkiewicz's project as it was assumed before.

life writing

intimacy

EXPERIMENT

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