

Leopold Buczkowski's war diaries: an anthropological reading*

Maciej Libich

ORCID: 0000-0002-8536-3315

*The article is part of the research project "Record of the Wartime Experience in the Diaries of Leopold Buczkowski (1905-1989), Anna Pogonowska (1922-2005) and Jerzy Kamil Weintraub (1916-1943)," funded by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education under the Diamond Grant programme (grant number: DI2018 012148).

A word of introduction

There are only a few writers as mysterious in the history of literature as Leopold Buczkowski (1905-1989), the author of *Czarny potok* [*The black brook*] (1954), *Dorycki krążganek* [*A Doric cloister*] (1957) or *Pierwsza świetność* [*Former glory*] (1966) – shocking, experimental novels about World War Two and Shoah. Despite the passage of time, his works never cease to surprise and continue to be relevant, which is proved by new generations of readers and researchers, attracted to them¹. Yet, it is hard to resist the impression that the meaning of Buczkowski's writing remains elusive: hardly anybody studies his considerable archives², which comprise barely legible notes and extensive correspondence. Little is being said about his non-literary artistic activity: paintings, drawings or sculpture³. Besides (or perhaps:

¹ Among the youngest generation of scholars studying the works and visual arts of Leopold Buczkowski it is worth mentioning, among others, Piotr Sadzik and Dawid Skrabek, quoted in the ensuing parts of this article, as well as Justyna Staroń, who studies Buczkowski's archives and visual arts. See: Justyna Staroń, „Przejawy uczuć w zapisie doświadczeń. Między kartami listów męża do żony” [„Expressions of emotions in the record of experiences. Between the pages of a husband's letters to his wife”], *Konteksty* 3 (2015): 7–16; Justyna Staroń, „Dialog sztuk. O twórczości artystycznej Leopolda Buczkowskiego” [„The dialogue of arts. On artistic works of Leopold Buczkowski”], in: (Dy)fuzje. Związki literatury i sztuki w Polsce po 1945 roku [(Dif)fusions. Links between literature and art in post-1945 Poland], ed. by Magdalena Lachman, Paweł Polit (Łódź: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, 2019), 87–118.

² Leopold Buczkowski Archive is held in Adam Mickiewicz Museum of Literature in Warsaw, cat. no. 1617–1663. The catalogue numbers for diaries, notebooks and memoirs are 1641–1643. War diaries are catalogued under numbers 1641.1–1641.3.

³ Fortunately, this happens more and more often. A portent of change is the exhibition of Buczkowski's art works in the Museum of Art in Łódź (29.10.2021–13.02.2022). See: Leopold Buczkowski. Przebłyśki historii, przelotne obrazki [Leopold Buczkowski. Reflections of history, fleeting images], ed. by Agnieszka Karpowicz i Paweł Polit (Łódź: Muzeum Sztuki w Łodzi, 2021).

most crucially), the writer's biography remains something of a mystery, especially its war-time part, including the unsubstantiated participation in the September campaign, as well as his involvement in the resistance in the region of Podlasie, mentioned only in passing, participation in the Warsaw uprising, and his imprisonment and escape from a filtration camp Dulag 121 in Pruszków⁴. It is hard to overestimate the importance of Buczkowski's war notes from the period 1943-1945 (published in 2001 as *Dziennik wojenny* [*War diary*]⁵), because they prove to be not only a bridge connecting the pre-war, structurally organised *Wertepy* [*Rough terrain*] (1947) with the linguistically and narratively fractured *Czarny potok*⁶. This document can also shed more light on the writer's occupation-time biography. Hitherto, however, Buczkowski's notes have not provided any answers to scholars' numerous questions.

The main question concerns the authenticity of the manuscripts of three notebooks of Buczkowski's diary. In his introduction to *Dzienniki wojenne* Sławomir Buryła (the editor and one of the most important scholars of Buczkowski) claims that the manuscripts are not the 1940's originals but clean copies, which Buczkowski prepared in 1987. The evidence for this claim is supposedly revealed in the notes „I.87”, „II.87” and „III.87”, visible on the first pages of the notebooks. According to Buryła, these are “the dates on which the diary was being organized and rewritten”⁷. Less than a decade later the scholar revisited this claim, supporting it with an additional argument – lack of deletions, which are only to be expected in a text written on an ongoing basis⁸. At the same time, Buryła mentioned possible counterarguments, which might actually suggest that the manuscript is an original: illegible fragments, irregular handwriting, variable dating system⁹. The scholar, however, glosses over these reservations in his later essay devoted to Buczkowski's diaries, and reinforces his support for the clean copy claim: “How much of the notes that Buczkowski was writing on an ongoing basis went missing? Without access to the 1987 clean copy it is impossible to answer this question [...] Without the original version of the diary the only reference for the issue of materiality is the 1987 manuscript¹⁰.”

⁴ Buczkowski's proclivity for multiplying versions of his biography is evident. Hanna Kirchner said that the writer treats his life story like „a text which he can creatively use, imposing a kind of a poetic net upon trivial details [...]”. See: Hanna Kirchner, „Pan Leopold. Rysunek z pamięci” [„Mr. Leopold. A sketch from memory”], in: *Wspomnienia o Leopoldzie Buczkowskim* [Remembering Leopold Buczkowski], ed. by Jan Tomkowski (Ossa: Dom na Wsi, 2005), 75.

⁵ Leopold Buczkowski, *Dziennik wojenny* [War diary], introduction and afterword by Sławomir Buryła, edited by Sławomir Buryła, Radosław Sioma (Olsztyn: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Warmińsko-Mazurskiego, 2001).

⁶ Sławomir Buryła, „Między «Wertepami» a «Czarnym potokiem»: zagadnienia ewolucji prozy Leopolda Buczkowskiego” [„Between «Wertepy» and «Czarny potok»: issues in the evolution of Leopold Buczkowski's prose”], *Teksty Drugie* 2 (2001): 265–273.

⁷ Sławomir Buryła, Wstęp [Introduction], in: Leopold Buczkowski, *Dziennik wojenny*, 18.

⁸ Sławomir Buryła, „Edytorskie aspekty twórczości Leopolda Buczkowskiego. Rekonesans” [„Editorial aspects of Leopold Buczkowski's works. A reconnaissance”], *Pamiętnik Literacki* 2 (2008): 174.

⁹ Buryła, „Edytorskie aspekty twórczości Leopolda Buczkowskiego. Rekonesans”, 174–175.

¹⁰ Sławomir Buryła, „«Dziennik wojenny» Leopolda Buczkowskiego – wyzwanie dla (młodego) edytora” [„Leopold Buczkowski's «Dziennik wojenny» - a challenge for a (young) editor”], in: *Zapisywanie wojny. Dzienniki z lat 1939–1945* [Recording war. Diaries from 1939-1945], ed. by Maciej Libich, Piotr Sadzik (Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2022), 117–132. The text first appeared in English in 2019, see Sławomir Buryła, „«Dziennik wojenny» by Leopold Buczkowski. A challenge for a (young) editor”, *Acta Universitatis Lodzianensis. Folia Litteraria Polonica* 4 (2019): 183–200.

The issue of the diary's authenticity will likely never be resolved: what we know about that source is fragmentary and derived from the notes themselves. Therefore, the problem requires special care. I do not mean to say that I reject Buryła's claim. I do believe, however, that both the intermittent, chaotic form of the diary and numerous traces of re-readings (e.g., additions or examples of underlining) suggest a need to revisit the established knowledge, dating back to the beginning of this century. What is at stake here is more than the ability to access crucial information about Buczkowski's writing practices¹¹. The primary objective is to establish the status of the diary itself. Reproducing the notes might be related to the accompanying process of editing the diary, i.e., abridging, correcting, and censoring the text¹². Thus rewritten diary is no longer a diary (at least not in the anthropological meaning of the word) but it takes on the function of an edited literary work, which means one needs to raise the issue of appropriate methodological approach to studying it¹³. Therefore, I would like to describe the materiality of the notebooks – a first attempt of this kind in the history of studying the diary – and then attempt to answer the question whether Buczkowski's diaries are an authentic record of the war experience or maybe a text of an uncertain genre-genetic relationship, written by the author many years after the war.

The manuscripts of war diaries

What I mean by Leopold Buczkowski's war diaries are the three notebooks mentioned above, which were the basis for the publication of *Dziennik wojenny*. They cover nearly the entire diaristic legacy of the writer, which also includes a handful of scattered notes, mostly from the second half of the 1940s and from the 1950s: musings on the history of art, calendar entries, simple bills and accounts. The Warsaw collection also contains (typescript copies of) loose sheets with quasi-diary entries, which in many respects are similar to Buczkowski's prose from mid-20th c. - most likely materials, which were provisionally edited, possibly with a view to being published in the future¹⁴. Judging from these documents, one can conclude that the author of *Czarny potok* was not in the habit of making notes daily, and the practice of diary writing was his reaction to the dismantling of the pre-war world and the shaping of a new socio-political reality.

Buczkowski's diaries differ from war-time notes of the majority of Polish writers, not only because they use crude, vulgar language to document the savagery and brutal atrocities committed

¹¹Zob. Paweł Rodak, „Wojna i zapis (o dziennikach wojennych)” [„War and record (on war diaries)”], *Teksty Drugie* 6 (2005): 39.

¹²This is a common practice amongst diarists. Preparing his intimate records for print, they corrected and edited them – quite significantly – to name but Leopold Tyrmand or Andrzej Bobkowski. See: Łukasz Mikołajewski, „Pamięć fabularyzowana. Powojenne poprawki w «Szkicach piórkem» Andrzeja Bobkowskiego” [„A fictionalised memory. Postwar corrections in Andrzej Bobkowski's «Szkice piórkem» [Sketches in quill],” in: *Buntownik – cyklista – kosmopolak. O Andrzeju Bobkowskim i jego twórczości* [Rebel – biker – cosmo-Pole. On Andrzej Bobkowski and his works], ed. by Jarosław Klejnocki, Andrzej Stanisław Kowalczyk (Warszawa: Muzeum Literatury im. Adama Mickiewicza, Więź, 2011).

¹³Paweł Rodak, *Między zapisem a literaturą. Dziennik polskiego pisarza w XX wieku* [Between record and literature. A diary of a Polish writer in the 20th c.] (Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2011), 11–12.

¹⁴See Piotr Sadzik, „– – – – Traumatografie Leopolda Buczkowskiego” [„– – – – Leopold Buczkowski's Traumatographies], *Rana. Literatura – Doświadczenie – Tożsamość* 1 (2020): 74–75.

46

Zjawił się Kozłowski, wznowił się prof.; dobre moi
 Kozania, pierwszy Kozłowski, który przyszedł - stawał
 wciąż o Chyżowie. Książki ciekawej! Powstał się
 cierny, Polak i obcego to wotum.

Miał już pierwszą wnuczkę Jona Półtoraka, parę
 tygodni temu; ten wnuczek to, podobno, ten, co
 jeniec i uwalnia. Był strasznie użę - Niemiec, ptaka
 i użę na swoich; nazwał to „laudyjoneu
 • ^{nieznany} ~~nieznany~~ między Guelu” -

A noc olbrzymia - najciemniejsza z ostatnich, wchodzi
miasto wina robotniczymi deneru, dnie i pnie
w dnie i sokoł, Daleki: ludek ciemny.

Rozbudowa w uwalni tego nopolitab Siniw
 Złaznego: wyprawdanie go w mię zchołupę,
 próbuje uciec im w kwaci ułd. - albo cy to
 most lubrican jenu po wojnie olbrzymi iżie-
 tony bratny, cy nie lepiej & jeniaci im będący
 o pioletach waloku i tonica, lub trapedzi
 sprowadzają goty luki.

Card from the first notebook of Leopold Buczkowski's diaries ("Grzański sad"), November 22, 1943. Source: Adam Mickiewicz Museum of Literature, Warsaw.

on Poles and Jews. Their heterogenic form also requires addressing. To begin with, Buczkowski only took notes on odd pages of his notebooks, leaving the even ones blank (a few of them contain isolated, hardly legible words, mysterious drawings and doodles or graphic symbols, like “X” or “XO”). In Boczkowski’s archive one can find literary materials arranged (or perhaps composed) in the same manner, e.g., a folder with a typescript entitled *Rafał Bajc* (cat. no. 1643), as well as his letters to family and friends, sometimes written on odd pages of an A4 sheet, folded in half¹⁵. Moreover, Buczkowski used a peculiar system of punctuation. The symbols he used are #, =, ≠, +, −, and their variations, impossible to represent in a word-processed document. The 2001 edition of *Dziennik wojenny* did not include Buczkowski’s original punctuation because the editors decided to regularize and simplify it, in order so as not to complicate further an already complex reading. Years later this decision was re-evaluated as a wrong one¹⁶. This reconsideration was influenced by, among others, Dawid Skrabek’s Ph.D. dissertation, in which the author pointed to the importance of the traumatic texture of Buczkowski’s notes¹⁷. Less than a decade later Piotr Sadzik followed in the steps of Skrabek, and analysed the interrupted punctuation in Buczkowski’s writings¹⁸. Finally, Buczkowski – as I will try to demonstrate – repeatedly returned to his diaries: he underlined some fragments, added words and short sentences, introduced small changes. From this point of view, it is impossible to treat the diary only as a textual witness of the war; rather, it is a visually varied, experimental work of art to which the author of *Czarny potok* would come back throughout his entire life – not only in search of inspiration.

Let us now turn to a detailed description of the diaries. The first notebook is 179 pages long. Out of these Buczkowski only fills 82, but since he was only writing on every other page, the notebook is almost entirely completed. This ruled notebook has no label markings; it is well-preserved, its pages are not crumbled or torn; none of them is missing. The cover is in a slightly less good condition: it is crumbled and creased, with a small bright stain a few centimeters in diameter in the middle. Besides that, in the bottom corner of the notebook there is an ink blot. The notebook bears clear signs of use; most likely it would have been moved from one place to another, as indicated by its ragged, worn-down edges. Still, Buczkowski undoubtedly took good care of the notebook and its contents: we will not find dirt or stains which could make the reading hard or impossible; we will find no traces of food or drink or bodily fluids inside. The notebook includes notes covering the period between October 7th, 1943, and March 8th, 1944. The diarist gave them the enigmatic title of *Grząski sad* [*A muddy orchard*]. The title returns in Buczkowski’s diaries and notes as a concept for some kind of artistic project (perhaps a screenplay), which never came to fruition.

The first page contains the above-mentioned notation “I.87”, written in blue ballpoint pen. The title “Grząski sad”, underlined with two parallel lines, appears on the second page. These words and all the remaining ones in this notebook were written in black ink. On the third

¹⁵One must remember that Buczkowski was not alone in this practice. It is worth recalling, e.g., Miron Białoszewski’s manuscripts.

¹⁶Buryła, „«Dziennik wojenny» Leopolda Buczkowskiego – wyzwanie dla (młodego) edytora”, 126–128.

¹⁷Dawid Skrabek, *Traumatyczna tkanka sztuki* [The traumatic tissue of art.] Unpublished M.A. dissertation, under the supervision of prof. Anna Burzyńska, Kraków 2011. A copy of the dissertation can be found in the library of the Faculty of Polish Philology of the Jagiellonian University.

¹⁸Sadzik, 69–88.

68

prawy tyżni w simecei, Non licet!

13. XII. Wtożni tyżni, gaudieci - to ci fajny
 dzieci, to znoue tam jony konferencji
 ołbywa kurua ~~z~~ ^{do} Kolt- i bandyty, co to ^{lieta}
 ludri obłone, tworowanie prelia w ranug
 pje rdirigent Korabimiu nuryuouego. To się
 naryua planoue rzyuicouanie wroga albo
 nejna materiatoua. A tu pwehouali znoue
 Beruukięgo, jęgo to rounhouali w Kholmopolu,
 teri na golara. Orkiestra rai uauia fropena,
 tylene oludni: bum, bum - i liiii rororaja!
 Sropeu rounala ni, cunpnyua u biškaua munista
 ni nomnyzi w grobie - nu! ni kolni miunice
 glut ei w tuan! - SS mau - gras rthleu i rth
 rthela nad grobem Beruukięgo 5 rany rzyuere,
 robi to tak me rpoluouie, i Kujolru rthoua
 rthouya ku rthouci, jędy go ktos dę rthouym
 rthouit let rthouiey. A rona rthouiey
 znacy ni wtooua tak rthouli jęu Krolik

Card from the first notebook of Leopold Buczkowski's diaries ("Grzański sad"), December 13, 1943. Source: Adam Mickiewicz Museum of Literature, Warsaw.

page Buczkowski's diaristic notes begin. As remarked by Buryła, the lack of any corrections, erasures or even spelling errors, typical of writing on an ongoing basis, is quite peculiar. Instead, underlining is a recurrent feature: it sometimes concerns single lexical items (perhaps when Buczkowski wants to signal an important fragment of the text), sometimes – a few final words in a line or the entire line, when the diarist wants to separate two paragraphs from one another. Besides this, one can encounter numerous underscorings in pencil, not in Buczkowski's hand. These were introduced by the editors of his diary, who used this method to highlight illegible words (some of them remain undeciphered until today; in *Dziennik wojenny* they are indicated by square brackets). Editorial interventions are also the likeliest explanation for blue ballpen underscorings on pages 22, 23 and 24 (more about this will be said in what follows). The red vertical line, extending over half of page 22, is of unknown origin. Red crayon was also used to underscore a three-lines' long sentence on page 46: "And tonight – the darkest of the dark nights, the eastern wind is blowing frozen rain, whistling in wires and in pines. A distant thunder of cannons".

On page 31v two words were written and underscored in pencil: "Szapiro" and, right underneath it, "Durmianka". Most likely they are surnames, but they do not appear in *Wertepy* or in *Czarny Potok*, nor do they recur in other parts of the diary, so it is hard to say why Buczkowski wrote them down¹⁹. The same question relates to other surnames: "Szonort" on page 59v and "Riess" on page 60v (underneath there is the addendum "on the porch", at the top a mysterious doodle, which looks like two curly brackets, i.e., „{}"). The meaning of three words on page 81v are clear enough: „Dudyń”, „Sałaśka” and „Werchobusy” are names of villages from the Brody region. In the top margin of page 32 Buczkowski drew five big "X" symbols. He also drew one such symbol in the bottom margin of page 35, two more symbols on page 45v, one on page 47v, three in the top margin of page 48, three more on page 49, whereas at the top of page 80 one can see the symbols "X O !". One might venture a claim that this is how the diarist highlighted the most important parts of the text while re-reading his diary. On page 66 the sentence "I'm chopping wood with Zygmunt in the forest" is highlighted by means of thick boxes in pencil on either side of the sentence. This is the only time Buczkowski mentions his youngest brother Zygmunt, who was murdered in the massacre perpetrated by the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) in Podkamień. The highlighting must have been added later, because a different writing instrument was used for it. This point becomes more meaningful when considering Buczkowski's entry for August 1944: "Last night again I had a dream about [...] Zygmunt. The Podkamieniec crime overshadows everything".

It is worth considering page 58, which includes as many as two corrections. In the sentence "The fine ones are dying and the ever-shittier shits come center stage and fill up the s.-c. «goblet of life» = by rejecting, putting into graves with the best of hearts, goblets of life = one would need to produce something like Tuwim – a «sensitive antenna of human stupidity»", the diarist crossed out the word "Tuwim" and right next to it wrote "Winawer"; a bit lower down the page he corrected the word "mieniany". Another correction – probably the most interesting one – is on page 68. On that page one reads: "It is December the 13th, what a great

¹⁹ „Durmianka" is also the name of a Ukrainian village; but this place is in the Chernihiv district, more than 500 km away from Podkamień, where Buczkowski was born.

day, because there's another conference or something between the fucking-poor-colt [Pol. *kurwa-bieda-kolt*] – with the bandit, who's training people right into the fartage of a machine gun". Buczkowski is making a reference to the Cairo conference, which took place on December 3rd-7th, 1943. It was a meeting between Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Winston Churchill, who were discussing, among other issues, a possible cooperation with China against Japan. "Fucking-poor-colt" is, of course, Roosevelt, but in the original version Buczkowski wrote "fucking-Jew-colt" [Pol. *kurwa-żyd-kolt*]. The word *żyd* 'Jew' is almost entirely blurred but the following elements are clearly visible: the initial letter "ż", the bottom half of one of three letters, which can only be "y", "g" or "j" (it has to be a vowel in this context) and the top part of the third letter, which can only be a "d" because it ends (rather than begins, as with "b", "h", "k" "l", "t") with a vertical line.

One more typographic feature is noticeable in the first notebook i.e., the changing style of handwriting. Quite regular until page 70, the handwriting unexpectedly changes and Buczkowski begins to write small, narrow letters. He returns to the original letter size on page 74, which marks the beginning of a longer, undated note, probably from December 31st, 1943 or January 1st, 1944 (it concerns the New Year). Another entry is from February 18th, 1944 and the next one – from February 19th; the handwriting of both is similar to the entries on pages 3-70. In his final note – from March 8th 1944, the handwriting changes again.

Finally, one also needs to mention changes in the manner of dating. An example of this are the dots that the writer uses in his dating system in order to separate the day from the month, sometimes the month from the year. Sometimes he purposefully skips the year or forgets about it, then returns to marking it, only to abandon this practice again; the notation lacks consistency in this case also.

Let us now turn to the second notebook. This one is checked, with no label markings. It consists of 149 pages, but the notes fill only 50 of them. The entries cover the period between August 1st and September 19th, 1944. This one is in a much worse shape than the first notebook. Its pages are crumbled, creased, and yellowed, some of them have large stains of transparent substance, probably water. The notebook is frayed and it is falling apart; the four metal staples are rusted, colouring the pages brown. This means that the second notebook was in all likelihood exposed to humidity. The notes themselves seem to confirm this: during the Warsaw uprising Buczkowski was hiding in the basements of Żoliborz, which were often flooded. "There is water in the basement, almost up to the knees. The little one caught a cold yesterday" [August 1944, no specific day date]. This notebook was probably moved around more often than the previous one. Its cover seems to sustain this possibility: very frayed at the front, with numerous stain marks (both bright and darker, smaller and bigger), it has visible scratching marks at the back. In the middle of the first page of the cover there is a stained, worn sticker, on which Buczkowski wrote in black ballpoint pen: "POWSTANIE NA ŻOLIBORZU" ['THE ŻOLIBORZ UPRISING']. Between the words "powstanie" ('uprising') and "na" [lit. "on"; the preposition used in the phrase 'na Żoliborzu'] he wrote in pencil (probably earlier): "Bucz 44".

On the first page there is a note "II.87", written in blue ballpen. The same pen was used to indicate – like in the previous notebook – three words on pages 4 and 5: "raining", "rapid-fire"

and “etc.”. These words are not particularly important for the meaning of the text, and it is hard to assume that Buczkowski saw something particularly interesting in them, but at the same time their purpose is difficult to interpret, so it is probable that the markings in ballpen were made by one of the diary’s editors. The likeliest candidate is Bogusław Żurawski, who was preparing for publication the first two parts of the diary in the 1990’s²⁰. One can also see numerous symbols written in pencil, which – with a degree of probability – can be ascribed to Buczkowski (e.g., a thick vertical uneven line running through half of page 23). On page 24 the first sentence of a new paragraph is highlighted by means of slanted lines; similar symbols appear on pages 25, 26, 27, 38, 52.

Buczkowski’s notation is not consistent here either: both in terms of the manner of handwriting, its slant, writing tools and the dating system used. Notes on pages 3-10 were made in black ink. The final three lines of page 10 were written in pencil, which remained in use until the end of page 13. On page 14 he reached for a black-ink pen again but having written less than a whole paragraph he switched back to blue ink; the notes then assume dark-blue colour, turning purple a few lines below. Starting with page 17 Buczkowski wrote in black ink again, but on page 18 the colour returned to blue. In the middle of page 27 Buczkowski picked up a pencil again, and used it till the very end of the notebook (although not without exceptions). On page 27 he corrected the ending of one of the paragraphs - first using a pencil to cross out repeatedly a sentence written in blue ink, then overwriting it with another one, this time in black ink. It is very hard to decipher the original words: “«The dawn [Pol. *zorza*] of freedom is flashing» - just think about it, listen, flashing (there is flashing, but of grenades and bombs, incessant, unstoppable for over a month now) = and now the dawn [orig. *żorża*] (shoepolish *żorża*) we can see the dawn [orig. *żorża*], it is a five-pointed one, from the direction of Lublin, it celebrates its [three illegible words]”. The new version is less problematic: The dawn [Pol. *zorza*] of freedom is flashing» - just think about it, listen, flashing (there is flashing, but of grenades and bombs, incessant, unstoppable for over a month now) = and now the dawn [orig. *żorża*, i.e. the shoepolish by the name of *Żorża*] we can see the dawn [orig. *żorża*], it burns the city, it burns us, it burns the girls, it burns the chickens and it doesn’t mean anything, this dawn [orig. *zorza*] – Bolek is smiling”. Right next to it Buczkowski drew a pictogram representing the sun, which he added on the blank page next to it: “Sugar on the tongue, Satan in the throat →”, and underneath: “A brawl at the parachute: who has the right to steal it?”. He also used black ink to write one of the sentences finishing the uprising-time diary: “We will avenge Pawiak!” (II, p. 60)²¹, a list of twenty-one streets of Żoliborz (p. 59v), as well as a nugget of (an unfinished and unpublished) article *Na tropach sztuki* [Tracking art] (II, pp. 61–61v) and a piece of short prose, whose fragments were later incorporated into *Czarny potok* (II, pp. 68–73).

One also needs to mention the dating system. This time Buczkowski begins with Arabic numerals: „1.8.” (II, p. 3). The date „2.8” is written immediately after the unfinished final sen-

²⁰Leopold Buczkowski, „Powstanie na Żoliborzu”, edited by Bogusław Żurawski, Regiony 3-4 (1992) and Leopold Buczkowski, „Grząski sad”, „Powstanie na Żoliborzu”, edited by Zbigniew Taranienko, Bogusław Żurawski, Ex Libris 57 (1994).

²¹Unless stated otherwise, in the brackets I list the number of the diary’s notebook, then page number, following the Museum of Literature’s foliation.

na kle ty, cerni, uvoj, Jovica, biote
gotskie leq. bokst leq. Napawno
no prawdziwne, hardziej: polskie; naprawde,
symbolene urozkiego, na ugleceni =

A na wlokateli wloziyeli
der krolka jst ter: biaty goty b: Jovis
pimata uymy lit olla tego plakotu:

"Wolnosci btyaska zorza" - pomylci
tylko, stuchajcie: btyaska / btykajcie, ale granaty
i bomby, ter pony; gwokid jwi uierige / =
a terai: zorza / posta zorza / uidering ty iony,



~~poli miasto, poli nas.~~
~~poli: dudusta, poli, kurcyta i nie wie~~
~~znowy ta zora - Polak usmiecha sig~~

31. VIII. Tu o goda: 11³⁰ uprzedtem dol polka
i razar uodkciaty houbowce ughawiaci nare
obierci, uobki: uoytko co uije: pony, kanarkci: koty
i ptaactwo. Po i tak - u polka qini pzo
zorra; jas, uilli pzo ani shodu. Kanarkci
pzo jonegus obraru ualartem u diewulskiego.
11 dnyow. Zpinyta ter p. Kanarkci, jej syn

Card from the second notebook of Leopold Buczkowski's diaries ("The Uprising in Żoliborz"), August 30-31, 1944. Source: Adam Mickiewicz Museum of Literature, Warsaw.

tence of the entry for the previous day (II, p. 5), and the entire note is separated from the following paragraph with a green long horizontal line. Another date marks August 20th (II, p. 7). The publishers of *Dziennik wojenny* assumed that all the notes Buczkowski wrote between August 2nd and 20th 1944 (II, pp. 5-7) are actually part of an August 2nd entry, but, rather than recording the specific dates, the diarist substitutes them with lines – perhaps on purpose, in order to emphasise the inadequacy of normal dating systems in war conditions, or maybe this happens by accident, because he forgot what day it was. This manner of dating should be revisited and a division of the notes should be introduced in future editions. On page 5 Buczkowski begins a new paragraph with the words: “Today St. John’s Cathedral collapsed! And other churches too!”; this happened on August 17th, not at the beginning of the uprising. A similar verification is needed for the notes written between 20th and 29th of August. If one assumes that all of them date back to August 20th, after less than three weeks of fighting, Buczkowski would have had to write: “Today it’s been 4 weeks since our W-saw was turned to ashes” (II, p. 10). This dissonance is striking, because the above-quoted sentence is written in pencil, and the previous one – from a different paragraph – in pen. A similar notation appears on page 14. Buczkowski then substitutes pencil for pen and begins a new paragraph from the words: “It’s been already 29 days of fighting in W-saw [...]”. This entry, however, raises some doubt, because the number “29” only appears in the top margin of page 18 (four pages later). The following page includes the number “30”. Interestingly enough, “30” will return twice more: the first time – on page 22, then again (with the addendum “time: 12”) on page 24. Could it be that all these notes were written on the last but one day of the month, just before noon? Or maybe Buczkowski made a mistake in his notation? Future editors should look into this more closely. Subsequent dates are similar to the ones from the first diary: “31.VIII”, then „7.IX”, „8.IX”, „9.IX”, „10.IX”, „12.IX”, „13.IX” and „14.IX”.

The third notebook is 188 pages long, but Buczkowski only filled 33 of them. These are notes written sporadically between December 27th 1944, and October 22nd 1945. The cover is virtually intact (except for a small dent at the front); the pages do not feature any crumbling or stains (except for the few initial ones, especially 3-5). In the bottom right corner of page 1, which contains the note “III.87” (and above it - a vertical pencil line), there is quite a big stain, probably left by the pencil lead or black ink). Page 2 contains a few unclear letters in a child’s handwriting. This was done by Tadeusz Buczkowski – Leopold’s son – born in 1945. Buczkowski’s notes begin from page 3, but they are not dated. The first dated entry only appears on page 7 and was written on December 27th, 1944. Buczkowski then begins to write with a pen. He uses a dark navy-blue ink, which on the initial pages gradually changes colour into a brighter one, blue, so one can surmise that when he began to write some there was some leftover black ink in his pen. He used the blue ink right up to page 24; then he switched to black, and probably replaced the pen itself, because the writing became narrower.

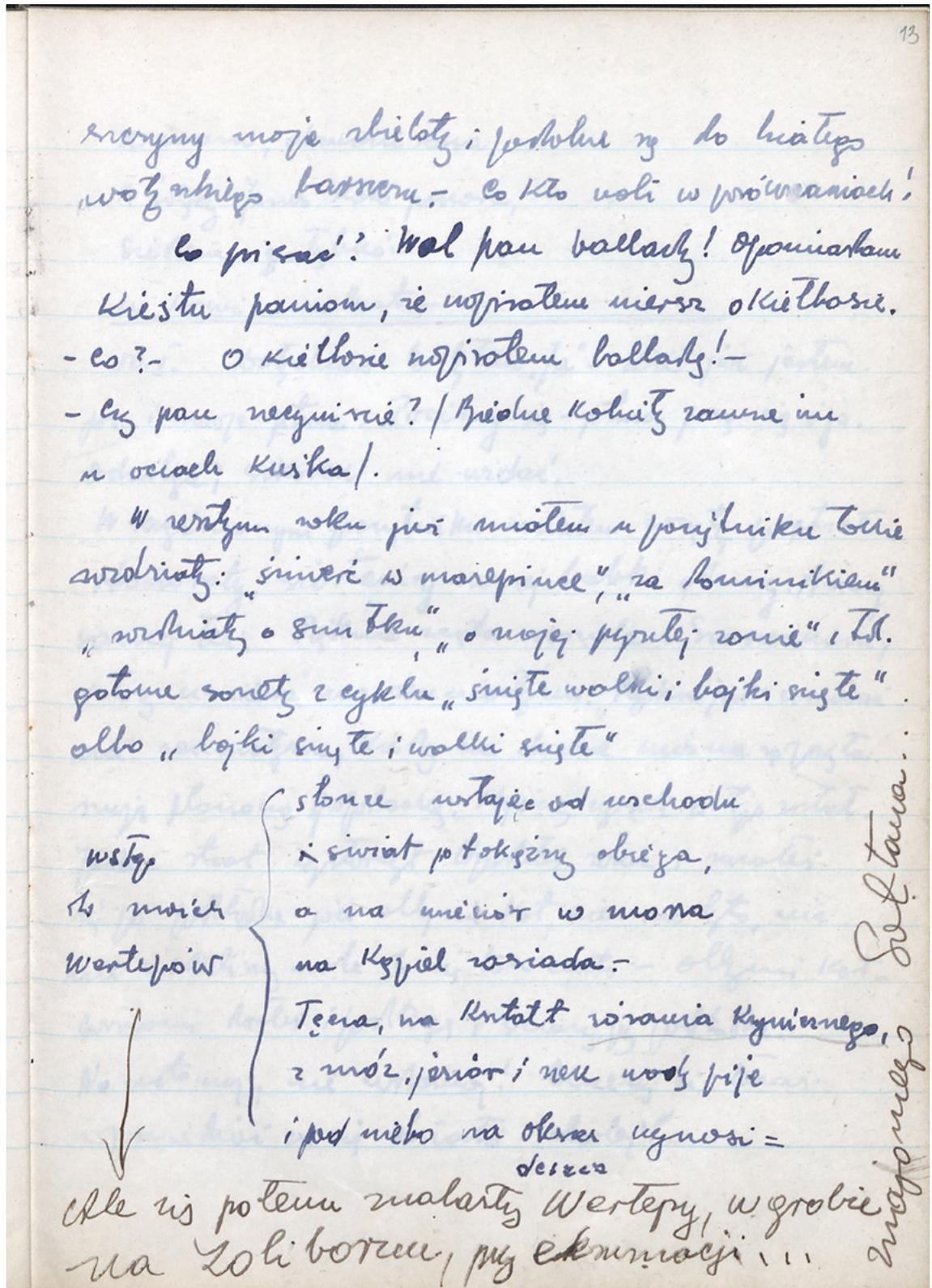
Pages 3-24 contain a few additions. In the top part of page 11 Buczkowski wrote two words in pencil: “menthol – mendol!”, but this addendum has no logical relation to the contents of his notes. At the bottom of page 13, under the reconstruction of a poem which is a motto of Buczkowski’s first novel, he wrote in black ink: “But then the *Rough terrain* was found, in a grave at Żoliborz, during the exhumation ... of Sołtan’s acquaintance...” At the top of page 18 he wrote in black ink: “Fever 39,2”. It is interesting that in the bottom margin of page

20 he sketched three “Xs” with a black ballpoint pen (as indicated by traces of ink – he only used black ballpoint pen once besides this instance – when he indicated the title of the second notebook using majuscule script: “The Żoliborz uprising”). On page 34, the first one not filled by Buczkowski, there are two crooked letters “b”, written in pencil by Tadeusz, and traces of his learning how to write return at the end of the notebook, on pages 82v-92v (e.g., words “grandpa and grandma and Tadeusz”, “Tadeusz Buczkowski and daddy Leopold and mummy Marysia”). One should also point to irregular dating conventions: “27.XII”, „Year 1945”, „9.I”, „10.I”, „11.I”, „12.I”, „May 7. 1945”, „8.V”, „5.VI. Still Kraków”, „Kraków 12.VI.945”, „Kraków 21.VI.945”, „14 July 1945”. Clearly, format-wise, the third notebook of the diary is not uniform.

War diaries: a clean copy or a manuscript?

Sławomir Buryła points to lack of deletions as the main argument for his claim that the diary is a copy. Indeed, numerous pages of the diary – especially its first notebook – bear no trace of corrections, but Leopold Buczkowski’s notes are not free from revisions. These do not really comprise insignificant, orthographic or punctuation errors, whose presence can be expected even in a rewritten text, but they concern more significant changes, which sometimes modify the meaning of the entire sentence. Perhaps it would be more justified to enquire about the condition of the notebooks: how did they manage to survive the turmoil of war in a not-so-bad shape? This is unusual, especially when it comes to the first notebook; after all, it contains notes from the period of UPA’s most brutal persecution, and contain the description of Buczkowski’s flight from Ukrainian armed forces, and relocation from his family home to the crowded monastery in Podkamień. The reason for this near-perfect condition of the notebook might be very simple: the diarist took good care of his notes. He also could have hidden the diary or left it with somebody for safekeeping, only to reclaim it after the war. It is easier to explain the good condition of the third notebook: Buczkowski only used it in the final months of the war when he was hiding in the village of Gacki and did not actively participate in fighting. The second notebook – from the Warsaw uprising – does not require a similar explanatory commentary, as it clearly shows signs of war-time fatigue.

Let us now turn to the arguments against the clean copy hypothesis. The pages of the notebooks are dull or discoloured, the covers are wrinkled, the ink is faded (unlike other manuscripts or typescripts by Buczkowski from the second half of the century – these are well-preserved). These physical features confirm the suspicion that the notebooks date back to the pre-war period. One might of course assume that towards the end of the 1980’s the frugal Buczkowski turned to his notes from a few decades ago in order to rewrite his war diary, but this accounts neither for the faded ink nor for the illegibility of his pencil notes, which vanished entirely over time. Anyway, it would be hard to say why the writer would again use a pencil and pen if from the 70’s onwards he mainly relied on ballpoint pens and felt-tip pens. Particularly problematic are the notes „I.87”, „II.87”, „III.87”, written in blue ballpoint pen, which – apart from a few above-mentioned cases of underscoring by the editors – do not appear on the diary pages. Is it possible that Buczkowski, having written these notes, put down the ballpoint pen and reached for a pen or pencil? The writing tools raise other doubts, too.



Card from the third notebook of Leopold Buczkowski's diaries, 9 I 1945. Source: Adam Mickiewicz Museum of Literature, Warsaw.

In the first notebook Buczkowski used a fountain pen, which he often needed to dip in ink – this can be seen in the changing colour and ink saturation. After he wrote a dozen or so lines the ink began to fade again. The uncertainty related to this concerns the dates and first words of the entries, because they are never written in a faded ink. If Buczkowski really had been rewriting his diary after many years, would he have – without any exception – dipped his pen in the inkwell every time before beginning a new entry?

Let us also consider the underscoring in the first notebook. Definitely, the thickened annotations in pencil are Buczkowski's, e.g., the already mentioned boxes next to the sentence considering his brother Zygmunt. I assume, however, that the ballpen underscoring was made by the diary editors. Even though these occur only in a few words' long, semantically coherent fragments of the text, they are similar to underscorings from the second notebook, which only appeared next to three illegible words. But who was using the crayon? Probably it was Buczkowski himself. I believe this to be the case not only because these underlinings cover bigger portions of the text: entire sentences and paragraphs. I arrive at this conclusion having read Buczkowski's other archival materials, also underlined in red crayon. These materials, not processed by the editors in the '90s, are, e.g., quasi-diary notes from a file entitled *Rafał Bajc*. Moreover, it would be even possible to establish the precise moment in which Buczkowski drew these underlinings: it was probably during his work on *Czarny Potok* (ca. 1945-1948²²), because in that story there are numerous sentences lifted from *Rafał Bajc*. In this sense *Grząski sad*, i.e., the first notebook of the diary, bears traces of at least four readings by Buczkowski: the first one in late '40s or early '50s during his work on *Czarny potok* (red crayon), the second and third – perhaps during his query or work on *Dorycki krużganek* (pencil and black ballpoint pen), the fourth one – in 1987 (blue ballpoint pen). Is it possible that the diarist would have managed as many as four readings of his diaries between 1987 and his death in 1989, each time using a different writing tool?

Another issue are corrections. Surely, while rewriting his diaries Buczkowski would have taken proper care to ensure some neatness to his notation. Would he have allowed for the traces of the name of Julian Tuwim to remain visible after substituting it with the name of Bruno Winawer? Most importantly, would he have left a trail of such a significant change as crossing out the word "Jew" (I, p. 58)? We can speculate, of course, on the reason for this correction: this antisemitic remark, probably written in a fit of anger, must have seemed deeply inappropriate on the second reading, which likely happened already after the war. Let us not forget that a huge part of Buczkowski's literary heritage concerns Shoah; the correction in his diary then demonstrates a crystallization of his views and ethical stance. Probably for the same reasons he crossed out a sentence from the Żoliborz uprising (II, p. 27). Even though three words are carefully erased and illegible, we can assume that the diarist, when writing about the five-pointed star coming from the direction of Lublin means the Soviet Union and the Red Army. It is hard to say why Buczkowski decided that the sentence requires change, but it is certain that this correction changed the tone of the entire paragraph. A clean copy would not bear the traces of such a change.

²²Specific details can be found in Sławomir Buryła's article, in which he reconstructs the origins of *Czarny potok*. Sławomir Buryła, „Czarny potok» i archiwum” [„Czarny potok» and the archive”], *Forum Poetyki* 21 (2020): 167-169.

The second notebook presents an even clearer case. Uneven slant of the hand, regularly changing writing instruments, a few ink colours, poor condition of the notebook – all of these seem to be evidence that the manuscript was written in the 1940's. Buczkowski, who actively participated in the Warsaw uprising²³, was constantly changing locations, taking the notebook with him. He was writing with whatever he could use: a pencil or pens (viz. the discernible difference in the thickness of nibs). The notes were clearly made in a hurry and difficult conditions, which is why they are sometimes illegible – sentences break off in the middle, frequently they are written in a form understandable only for the diarist; Buczkowski often does not care about writing the date. It seems impossible to procure this form of notation under “home” conditions. Another argument against the clean copy hypothesis can be a fragment of prose, which appears on pages 68-73. Some parts of that fragment, in a revised form, made to *Czarny potok*. Would Buczkowski have rewritten this prose fragment in the '80s, knowing it had been published in a novel, in a revised form at that, forty years prior?

The same is true of the third notebook of the diary. Buczkowski initially wrote in it when he was in the village of Gacki (blue ink) and then – five months later – in Kraków (black ink). Change of ink, slant of the script, as well as the manner of dating are clearly related to the change of the diarist's location. Also, in this case there is no reason to suppose that a few decades after his initial inscriptions Buczkowski tried to recreate their graphically varied form. One more point is worth recalling: Tadeusz Buczkowski's childhood notes. Leopold's notes end on page 33, and Tadeusz's begin on the following one. One might assume that Tadeusz reached for one of the notebooks of the diary, which Leopold was using while working on *Czarny potok*, he flipped the pages right until the final inscriptions and he began drawing on subsequent blank pages. The converse seems much less plausible: it would require Buczkowski to retrieve from his archive a decades' old notebook, used only by Tadeusz, and use it for note taking right up to the page on which the first letters written in his child's hand appear.

A record of an experience?

A detailed description of the three notebooks supports the idea that they are original manuscripts of the diary: an unprocured record of experience, whose authenticity is best supported by its heterogenous, interrupted form. At the same time, this peculiar structure of notation (or at the very least its individual elements) encourages one to treat the diary as if it were an experiment: an attempt to create less a new language and more new manners of expression. Leopold Buczkowski was undoubtedly a man marked by war: a soldier, a freedom fighter, and an insurrectionist, who described some of his traumatic experiences in his notebooks. And yet, he never stopped being a writer; even in a liminal situation he would undertake a literary and philosophical reflection, problematizing in his diary issues concerning not just the language of his notes but also of their form. In this context the reading of the diary helps to understand a radical change of poetics that occurred between *Wertepy* and *Czarny potok*.

²³See Leopold Buczkowski's insurrectionist bio: <https://www.1944.pl/powstancze-biogramy/leopold-buczowski,4857.html>, accessed 11.09.2022.

Hitherto, the diary has been read mostly from the structuralist perspective (this also concerns Buczkowski's fiction), which means that these readings need to be supplemented with anthropological approaches, especially in their critical-genetic aspect, which is concerned with the search of senses hidden in the material layer of the notes. It is only through combining these two methodological orders that we will be able to see the intention behind the diaries. Buczkowski's love of neologisms, archaisms, dialectal expressions, scatological humour, profanities, and surreal metaphors, as well as his attempts at intervening into the syntactic order are combined with an unusual choice of punctuation symbols. These, in turn, are part of the asemantic layer of the notation, which also includes also graphic symbols in the margins. This layered combination of interrelatedness prevents one from viewing the diaries merely as a record of the *hic et nunc* experience; nor can they be approached as a mere literary experiment. Buczkowski's records occupy a space which is hard to define, i.e., at the crossroads of 'life writing', literature and visual arts.

Simple answers cannot be provided for other questions raised in this paper, e.g., the reason for using only the odd pages of the diary. Did Buczkowski leave the even pages blank to use them for other types of notes (an example of which could be surnames, placenames, and street names)? Perhaps he was planning to use them for future corrections and editorial comments? And maybe he was afraid his notes would shine through? This answer, however, brings about other problems: paper was hard to come by in war conditions, so how to explain such uneconomical use of the notebooks? One should also question the symbols and drawings in the margins. Was it really a way of highlighting important passages or rather a form of selecting the material? If so, why did he do it?

I leave these questions unanswered, hoping they will spark future queries and research, which will help to continue debates on the diary and solve at least some of the dilemmas signalled above. This discussion seems important for future considerations of Leopold Buczkowski's works, especially in the light of the two envisaged new editions of his notes. Sławomir Buryła plans to revive *Grząski sad* and *Powstanie na Żoliborzu* (to be published by Instytut Literatury), and the present author wants to publish three war notebooks, which will be accompanied by dispersed fragments of semi-diarist and prosaic nature, including *Rafał Bajc* (to be published by Marginesy).

translated by Justyna Rogos-Hebda

References

- <https://www.1944.pl/powstancze-biogramy/leopold-buczowski,4857.html>. Accessed 11.09.2022.
- Buczowski, Leopold. *Dziennik wojenny*. Introduction and afterword by Sławomir Buryła. Ed. by Sławomir Buryła, Radosław Sioma. Olsztyn: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Warmińsko-Mazurskiego, 2001.
- . *Dzienniki*, cat. no. 1641.1–1641.3.
- . „Powstanie na Żoliborzu”. Ed. by Bogusław Żurakowski. *Regiony* 3-4 (1992): 2–18.
- Buryła, Sławomir. „«Czarny potok» i archiwum”. *Forum Poetyki* 21 (2020): 167–169.
- . „Dziennik wojenny” Leopolda Buczkowskiego – wyzwanie dla (młodego) edytora. In: *Zapisywanie wojny. Dzienniki z lat 1939–1945*, ed. by Maciej Libich, Piotr Sadzik, 117–132. Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2022.
- . „Edytorskie aspekty twórczości Leopolda Buczkowskiego. Rekonesans”. *Pamiętnik Literacki* 2 (2008): 167–189.
- . „Między «Wertepami» a «Czarnym potokiem»: zagadnienia ewolucji prozy Leopolda Buczkowskiego”. *Teksty Drugie* 2 (2001): 265–273.
- . *Wstęp*. In: Leopold Buczkowski, *Dziennik wojenny*. Introduction and afterword by Sławomir Buryła, ed. by Sławomir Buryła, Radosław Sioma. Olsztyn: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Warmińsko-Mazurskiego, 2001.
- Kirchner, Hanna. *Pan Leopold. Rysunek z pamięci*. In: *Wspomnienia o Leopoldzie Buczkowskim*, 57–100. Ed. by Jan Tomkowski. Ossa: Dom na Wsi, 2005.
- Leopold Buczkowski. *Przebłyty historii, przelotne obrazy*. Ed. by Agnieszka Karpowicz, Paweł Polit. Łódź: Muzeum Sztuki w Łodzi, 2021.
- Mikołajewski, Łukasz. *Pamięć fabularyzowana. Powojenne poprawki w „Szkicach piórkiem” Andrzeja Bobkowskiego*. In: *Buntownik – cyklista – kosmopolak. O Andrzeju Bobkowskim i jego twórczości*. Ed. by Jarosław Klejnocki, Andrzej Stanisław Kowalczyk, 137–173. Warszawa: Muzeum Literatury im. Adama Mickiewicza, Wiąz, 2011.
- Rodak, Paweł. *Między zapisem a literaturą. Dziennik polskiego pisarza w XX wieku*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2011.
- . „Wojna i zapis (o dziennikach wojennych)”. *Teksty Drugie* 6 (2005): 33–45.
- Sadzik, Piotr. „--- Traumatografie Leopolda Buczkowskiego”. *Rana. Literatura – Doświadczenie – Tożsamość* 1 (2020): 74–75.
- Skrabek, Dawid. *Traumatyczna tkanka sztuki*. Unpublished MA thesis, under the supervision of prof. Anna Łebkowska. Kraków 2011, manuscript in the library of Jagiellonian University.
- Staroń, Justyna. *Dialog sztuk. O twórczości artystycznej Leopolda Buczkowskiego*. In: *(Dy)fuzje. Związki literatury i sztuki w Polsce po 1945 roku*. Ed. by Magdalena Lachman, Paweł Polit, 87–118. Łódź: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, 2019.
- . „Przejawy uczuć w zapisie doświadczeń. Między kartami listów męża do żony”. *Konteksty* 3 (2015): 7–16.

KEYWORDS

Leopold Buczkowski

war diaries

ABSTRACT:

This text presents an anthropological reading of Leopold Buczkowski's war diaries (1942–1945), as well as a polemic against claims made by Sławomir Buryła and Radosław Sioma. The author of the article argues that the three notebooks deposited at the Adam Mickiewicz Museum of Literature (Muzeum Literaturne im. Adam Mickiewicza w Warszawie) are not re-written, final drafts from the 1980s—as the editors of *Dziennik wojenny* (War Diary, 2001) claim—but original manuscripts. The researcher describes the material aspects of the diary, especially those elements that distinguish it from other wartime diaries—these include unprecedented punctuation, enigmatic notes made in the margins, and illegible drawings on the blank pages of the notebooks.

Czarny potok

GENETIC CRITICISM

trauma

EXPERIENCE

NOTE ON THE AUTHOR:

Maciej Libich – Ph.D. student in the Doctoral School for Humanities of Warsaw University. He is an editor in „Wizje” and „Literatura na Świecie”. Laureate of Diamentowy Grant [The Diamond Grant], (2019). Co-editor of monograph *Zapisywanie wojny. Dzienniki z lat 1939–1945* [Recording war. Diaries from 1939-1945] (2022) and *Języki literatury współczesnej* [Languages of modern literature] (2022). He published, among others, in „Pamiętnik Literacki” and „Teksty-Drugie”. He researches war diaries.